DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 472 445 EA 032 279

AUTHOR	Carr, Maureen Sherry
TITLE	Inquiring Minds: Learning and Literacy in Early Adolescence. Creating Communities of Learning & Excellence.
INSTITUTION	Northwest Regional Educational Lab., Portland, OR.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2002-12-00
NOTE	69p.; Produced with Steffen Saifer and Rebecca Novick.
CONTRACT	ED-01-CO-0013
AVAILABLE FROM	Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 101 SW Main St., Suite 500, Portland, OR 97204 (Item No. C120; $14.60). Tel: 503-275-9500; e-mail: info@nwrel.org. For full text: http://www.nwrel.org.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescent Behavior; Basic Skills; Childrens Writing; *Early Adolescents; Early Reading; *Emergent Literacy; Intermediate Grades; Junior High Schools; Learning Strategies; *Middle School Students; Middle Schools; Puberty; *Reading Ability; Reading Fluency; *Reading Skills; Reading Writing Relationship; Writing Ability; *Writing Skills; Youth
IDENTIFIERS	Literacy as a Social Process; Reading to Write

ABSTRACT

Current middle-school standards require students to operate at levels of literacy never before expected of 10- to 14-year-olds. This monograph, written for teachers, addresses literacy development in middle-school students, stressing the crucial role of teachers. It suggests that teachers must change the core of educational practice and examine their ideas about knowledge, the role of students and teachers in the educational process, and how their ideas or beliefs about learning are translated into instructional practice. The first chapter, "The Best of Times and the Worst of Times: Early Adolescence in the 21st Century," discusses biological, physical, cognitive, social, and emotional changes that occur during the ages between 10 and 14. The second chapter, "New Learning Paradigms for a New Millennium," provides an overview of learning theories that influence classroom practice, including behavioral theory and cognitive theory. The third chapter, "Creating Optimal Literacy Environments for Young Adolescents," examines how three principles of learning--construction of meaning, active engagement, and meaningful content--can be used to visualize literacy environments for middle-school students that maximize reading and writing achievement. Appendix I, "Suggested Professional Books," and Appendix II, "Suggested Authors and Their Works," are annotated bibliographies. (Contains 100 references.) (WFA)

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Inquiring Minds: Learning and Literacy in Early Adolescence

Maureen Sherry Carr

December 2002

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Learning and Literacy in Early Adolescence

Creating Communities of Learning & Excellence

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This publication has been funded at least in part with federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-01-CO-0013. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or any other agency of the U.S. government.

Inquiring Minds

Learning and Literacy in Early Adolescence

December 2002

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Acknowledgments

Appreciation is extended to the many educators and researchers who provided information and guidance in the revision of this publication. Grateful acknowledgment is given to the review panel for their valuable input: Jane Braunger, Bonita Coleman-Potter, Mary Elizabeth Curtis, Patricia Day, Susan Dauer, Sonja Grove, Neville Hosking, Elaine McManus, and Karen Piepmeier. Special thanks to Eugenia Cooper Potter for editorial review and technical editing, Linda Fitch for bibliographic review, and Denise Crabtree for design and production.

Cover image by Jerry Kruger.

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Introduction

As the United States prepared to greet the new millennium, growing concern about the achievement of U.S. students and its perceived impact on the nation's economic future prompted the development of a national educational agenda. This renewed interest in education at the national level emphasized high standards in core subjects and increased levels of accountability for achieving these standards. If successfully implemented, this agenda would prepare U.S. students to function in an exploding information age (Diegmueller, 1995).

School reform organized around high standards, and the application of these standards to "all students," presents a challenge to educators at every level of schooling. There is an expectation that students will:

- Reach higher levels of literacy
- Develop a deeper understanding of subject matter
- Become technologically sophisticated
- Achieve the capacity to adapt to ever-changing economic and social conditions (Brown & Campione, 1994)

The move toward achieving standards has been complicated by different conceptions in U.S. society concerning what knowledge is crucial for students to learn, what the most effective methods are to make this knowledge accessible to students, and which forms of assessment are appropriate measures of success. As the millennium approached, policymakers, educators, business interests, and legislators turned their attention to the critical role that literacy plays in achieving academic success as well as socioeconomic and personal goals.

NATIONAL FOCUS ON LITERACY

Literacy became a significant concern in 1994 when the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Report (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2000) showed that fourth-grade students experienced limited success in comprehension with an increasing achievement gap between the highest- and lowest-performing students. African American students' grade four reading performance has continued to improve since the 1994 assessment but still lags far behind European American and Asian American peers. While 62 percent of fourth-grade students perform at the basic level, only 38 percent are proficient and only 7 percent meet the advanced levels of reading achievement (NCES, 2000). Based on these data and interna-

tional comparisons of U.S. students with students in other industrialized nations, policymakers in Washington, D.C., became convinced that a movement was needed to upgrade the reading performance of the nation's children. The executive branch devised a proposal that emphasized strong literacy education, especially for primary students and the Congress appropriated billions of dollars so that all U.S. children would become independent readers by the end of third grade.

Most educators and policymakers have cheered this substantial support for the emergence and development of literacy in young children. Being an independent reader by grade three is a positive indicator of academic success, but it is by no means a guarantee. While U.S. fourth-graders rank near the top of the list in international comparisons, the NAEP scores of middle and high school students have remained flat for the past 30 years (Snow, 2002). In elementary grades, students learn to read but it is intentional and well-crafted instruction throughout the school years that assists students to become highly literate people.

The middle school years present students with a complex set of literacy tasks. Without considerable research to guide literacy instruction beyond grade three and substantial support for teachers and students to improve classroom practice we may continue to see disappointing NAEP results beyond grade four. More important, substantial numbers of adolescents will become turned off to reading and writing, unable to navigate the sophisticated materials in middle and secondary classrooms, and will fail to develop the literacy competence necessary to achieve their future aspirations.

Another look at NAEP scores at the eighth- and 12th-grade levels indicates that U.S. students do relatively well at the basic levels of literacy; that is, they can recognize words (decode) and comprehend literal text. To operate at what Miles Myers (1996) calls "critical translation literacy," students must be able to:

- Extend text through inference
- Draw appropriate conclusions
- Make connections to their personal lives and to other texts
- Communicate complex ideas through reading, writing, and speaking

U.S. students lose ground when it comes to higher levels of literacy with eighth-graders scoring about 33 percent for proficiency and only 3 percent at the advanced levels. Business and industry indicate that students will need to possess skills at least at proficient levels to be successful in the 21st century global economy (NCES, 2000).

Twelfth-graders weigh in at 40 percent for proficient NAEP levels but only 6 percent at more advanced levels of skill. As we move into comparisons across groups we find that Latino, African American, and Native American students are not making adequate progress when it comes to developing the literacy skills needed to succeed in the dominant society. Particularly worrying is the fact that the average scores for 17-year-old African American students are at the same levels as 13-year-old European American students (NCES, 2000).

If we are to achieve the objective of leaving no child behind, then legislators, policymakers, and business interests must heed the call of middle and high school teachers echoed by the National Council of Teachers of English Executive Committee (1999) and the Commission on Adolescent Literacy of the International Reading Association (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999) for a national agenda that addresses the literacy issues identified in both middle and secondary schools. This agenda would include:

- Longitudinal research on effective comprehension instruction

- Emphasis on instruction to develop metacognition (thinking about thinking) and other skills that undergird high literacy development
- Identification of practices that are highly effective for teaching reading—not just in English classes but in other content as well
- Support to develop assessments that provide information for designing instruction
- Financial assistance and support for students who have severe reading difficulties

An investment of time and money can help all students to achieve at the levels of literacy they need to be successful in their personal and work lives. However, we must recognize that students differ in background, oral language development, learning preferences, and cultural and linguistic heritage. Literacy instruction must speak to the personal, emotional, social, and academic needs of all our students.

Many teachers believe that instruction in elementary school prepares students adequately for the demands of the middle school curriculum. However, our current middle school expectations (or standards) require students to operate at levels of literacy never before expected of 10- to 14-year-olds. Few students will be able to meet these standards unless they receive focused and explicit literacy instruction. We cannot afford to have students reach a point in literacy development that stops further learning. We cannot let them hit the "literacy ceiling" (Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz, 1999). We need to let students know that we believe that it is never too late to become a member of the community of readers and writers and that we are committed to helping them to become card-carrying members of the literacy club.

RECONCEPTUALIZING THE TEACHING-LEARNING RELATIONSHIP

It is teachers who, in the end, will change the world of the classroom by understanding it.

—Lawrence Stenhouse (1988)

All teaching and learning is based on a set of assumptions that guide curriculum planning, instruction, and evaluation. A standards-based system assumes that every student can learn a body of knowledge and skills if everyone involved —teachers and learners—clearly understands what the expectations are. The standards-based philosophy further maintains not only that changes must occur in the complexity of learning experiences provided, but also that the way students are taught must be substantially modified. Students will only meet high standards if the learning environment assists them to construct content knowledge, explore the relationships among ideas, and develop connections to a world beyond the classroom.

To fulfill the promise of optimal achievement for all students, we must change the "core of educational practice," that is, we must reconceptualize our ideas of learning and intelligence and rethink the purpose and organization of schooling in a democratic society (Elmore, 1996). Reconceptualizing learning and teaching means teachers must examine their ideas about:

- Knowledge
- The role of students and teachers in the educational process
- How their ideas or beliefs about learning are translated into instructional practice (Elmore, 1996)

Reflecting on classroom practice helps to develop insights into the reasons behind the actions we take to support literacy learning. New understandings lead to conscious choices for both

beliefs and teaching practice (Omalza, Aihara, & Stephens, 1997). Shulman (1987) pointed out that teachers need broader connections within their schools, districts, and communities. Today's teachers must be collaborative members of professional communities, planning curriculum and coordinating the various instructional services available to students. It is crucial for teachers to build relationships with parents that foster the school's mission to promote learning, and teachers need to know as much about their students' lives as possible. They need to be cognizant of the cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity in their communities that influence their students' lives in school.

Teaching is a complex intellectual activity and educators produce new knowledge every day that can inform the world of literacy instructional practice. When teachers investigate their teaching practice, they examine beliefs about learning and teaching, think about what is or is not expert knowledge, and question common assumptions about schooling (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Collaborative inquiry into questions of educational concern is a potent way for educators to achieve congruence between their personal theories and effective practice and also to have some measure of control over what passes for educational knowledge.

It is important for teachers to invite students to participate in this inquiry so they understand that what is learned in school has a connection to life in the wider world. Young adolescents are desperate to know who they are and what they might become. They have energy and a curiosity about life and the world that can be the catalyst for classroom environments that excite the mind and stir the spirit.

My goals in offering this monograph are that educators will:

- Engage each other and their students in conversations about their lives as readers and writers
- View their students' backgrounds and experiences as strengths that can inform their instruction
- Offer invitations that encourage students to explore, to doubt, and to resolve doubt through literate inquiry
- Recognize the great intellectual potential of the developing adolescent
- Connect what we know about learning to optimize literacy learning for all middle level students

Educators and students need to be asking questions about the role of literacy in their lives and how involvement in literacy experiences will enhance the present as well as inform the future.

Chapter I. The Best of Times and the Worst of Times: Early Adolescence in the 21st Century describes what we know about individuals embarking on the exciting, confusing, frustrating, and challenging adventure we call early adolescence. In this section we discuss biological, physical, cognitive, social, and emotional changes that occur during the years between 10 and 14. Changes in all these areas have a significant impact on students' willingness to engage in literacy learning, indeed, in school learning of any kind. As educators, we can choose to work with these changes and build them into our instructional planning or we can ignore them and become frustrated by them. The latter option leads to disengagement from learning, school, and teachers. The former route can lead to marvelous growth for our students and ourselves.

Chapter II. New Learning Paradigms for a New Millennium provides an overview of learning theories that influence classroom practice.

The discussion starts with behavioral theory that has been a primary influence in education, especially in special education. In contrast to behaviorists, cognitive psychologists, developmental theorists, and psycho/sociolinguists have focused on the internal process of thinking and feeling. The conception of learning and the roles of the teacher and student differ depending on the assumptions that are made about human learning. While neuroscience is in its infancy as far as educational applications are concerned, there are some interesting connections between what brain researchers have found and cognitive theory.

Chapter III. Creating Optimal Literacy Environments for Young Adolescents examines how three principles of learning (construction of meaning, active engagement, and meaningful content) can be used to visualize literacy environments for middle school students that maximize reading and writing achievement. Issues explored relate to fluency and its impact on comprehension, explicit strategy instruction, and inquiry-based literacy learning.

Chapter I
The Best of Times and the Worst of Times: Early Adolescence in the 21st Century

I like to be free and make my own decisions, even if sometimes they are wrong.

—Middle School Student, Missoula, MT

When the private world of families and the public spheres of neighborhoods, communities and workplaces are mutually supportive, we have the best hope for preparing all of our adolescents for a new century.

—Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1995)

Adolescence is the second phase of human life characterized by rapid physical, cognitive, emotional, and social change. This marvelous and complex transition from childhood to young adult is often not met with the same degree of joy and enthusiasm as the move from infancy to childhood. We love to watch a developing child and we catalog changes in baby books, scrapbooks, photographs, and videos. Then just when it is smooth sailing and we have a handle on parenting, little Maria and Max hit puberty and they enter the adolescent zone. It is the rare American parent who does not enter this phase of his or her child's life with some trepidation and often a sense of panic.

A number of years ago I spent parts of every day visiting preservice teachers in local middle schools. My first impression of students in these schools was that they were jet-propelled chatterboxes who seemed to be everywhere at once. The idea of jet propulsion came to mind as I was walking by a classroom just as students were being dismissed from class. Doors literally popped open and bodies of varying sizes rocketed forth into the hallway. I decided in the future to be away from doors when students were launched from classes!

Students made their way to other classes calling excitedly to friends they had not seen in at least 50 minutes. These students had mastered the art of visiting with friends, grabbing books or lunches from their lockers, making potty stops, and telling a quick joke to the principal, all in a four-minute passing time. Since I had difficulty during parent night getting myself from one of my daughter's classes to another in six minutes, I can testify that this is not an easy feat.

Some adults wonder why any normal person would take on the task of working with middle school students. Many American adults think of middle school students as "hormones with feet." They are perceived as feckless, lethargic, uninterested in learning, and distrusting of anyone not in their peer group. The truth is young teens, as a group going through major life changes, are no

more callous, unthinking, stormy, irresponsible, or exhibitionist than other age cohorts (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995). My friends who teach in middle school tell me their kids are funny, quirky, avid learners when given the right challenge and appropriate support. These teachers love working with these exciting, frustrating, unpredictable, and caring young people.

BIOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL CHANGES

Undoubtedly, youth experience major biological changes especially in and before the teen years. The hormonal changes associated with puberty begin in late childhood with many American girls beginning menstruation as early as nine years old.

Biological maturation often has different effects for boys and girls (Eccles & Wigfield, 1997). Early-maturing boys seem to have an advantage since increased size and strength are important for sports, are a measure of protection against bullies, and are attractive to members of the opposite sex (Eccles & Wigfield, 1997). Females, on the other hand, seem uncomfortable with the padding that precedes hip growth and breast development. Eccles and Wigfield (1997) indicate that, of all the students making the transition from elementary school to middle school or junior high, early-maturing white females have the lowest self-esteem. Early-maturing females also are more likely to date at a younger age, be part of peer groups beyond their age level, and drop out, despite achievement levels equivalent to other girls (Eccles & Wigfield, 1997).

Physical development also varies substantially during this time. If one visits a seventh-grade classroom there will be girls that already look like women and boys who stand six feet tall. When I was in middle school, the class "heartthrob" was a redheaded young man who was more than six feet tall. Other boys in my class were my size—a little over five feet and no signs of peach fuzz, let alone actual hair on their faces. These late-maturing males tend to be less popular, more talkative, and demand more attention from teachers (Woolfolk, 2001). Some studies have suggested that while late-maturing males have difficulty during adolescence, as adults they may be more flexible, creative thinkers and problem solvers (Seifert & Hoffnung, 1991).

The differences in physical development among students in the middle grades may cause anxiety as students compare the size and growth of various body parts. Middle grades students need to know that being on a slower physical timetable is okay. Teachers can help students by providing literature and science materials that deal with the "normal" ranges of development and explain that there are pros and cons to both early and late maturation.

UNDERSTANDING ADOLESCENT ISSUES: LITERATURE CAN HELP

Reading and discussing literature that tackles issues of concern to teens supports their social and emotional development as well as increasing their literacy skills. Judy Blume is an author who tries to help kids come to terms with differences by creating narratives that let them know everyone is in the same boat. In the book, *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret,* we meet a sixth-grader who is at a new school, living in a new neighborhood, and hoping that some boy will dance with her at a party. Another of Blume's books, *Then Again, Maybe I Won't,* focuses on the issues of Tony Miglione who has a shoplifting friend and lives across from a girl who leaves her shade up when she is getting dressed. There are many more authors that speak to the anxieties and fears of middle level students. *Crash,* by Jerry Spinelli, deals with middle school anxieties from a male perspective. The story deals with the conflict

between "Crash Coogan," a large seventh-grade football player and his favorite subject of harassment, Penn Webb. Penn is a nerd, a dweeb, a vegetarian, and a cheerleader besides. Crash and Penn learn some interesting lessons when a prank goes too far. The great thing about the youth literature represented by these authors is that middle school kids get to learn vicariously from the characters' experiences. Being able to learn lessons about life indirectly helps adolescents gain cognitive competence.

RAGING INTELLECTS

As I reviewed the literature on middle schools and the development of structures that support these young adolescents, many articles and texts referred to the "raging hormones" and the many difficulties and challenges presented by the upheaval students experience prior to and during puberty. The emphasis often seemed to be on what middle school students could not do rather than what they were capable of doing. I found this notion echoed in the remarks of Hayes Mizell, Director of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's Program for Student Achievement (1995). Mizell maintained that many adults expect too little of young adolescents. Adults focus on adolescents' weaknesses instead of their strengths. He indicated that when we use terms like wacky, hormones with feet, and slightly brain dead, we characterize these young people as "not only out of control but disabled." He suggested that we concentrate on their "raging intellects" rather than "raging hormones."

Young people beginning middle school are on the threshold of a cognitive explosion.

Piaget referred to this new cognitive dimension as formal operations (Crain, 1985). It is the time when students begin not only to know what is but what might be. Students at least can begin to think hypothetically, consider options, and assess their own thinking. Middle schoolers can think in terms of ideals and principles and often have little patience with people who don't "walk their talk."

Just as younger children develop a form of egocentrism as they move forward cognitively so do adolescents. Younger children express their egocentrism by not seeing other points of view. Adolescents accept that other people think differently but they become very focused on their own beliefs, values, and ideas. They assess ideas and analyze beliefs and attitudes within the context of their own perspectives. Since their thoughts and opinions are so important to them, adolescents often think that their ideas, feelings, fears, and interests are as important to other people (Woolfolk, 2001).

Adolescents often blend their concern with physical development with this exclusive focus on their developing selves. David Elkind (1974) refers to this as an imaginary audience. Parents will recognize this in phrases such as, "my answer to the homework question we worked on was wrong: Everyone thinks I am stupid," or "look at this frizzy hair, I can never go to school again." I remember as a 14-year-old refusing to participate in school dances except as a server at the concession. Dancing was not my strong suit and I was sure the whole room would be staring and pointing out my ineptitude. Eventually, this notion of being always in the limelight diminishes and students achieve a degree of comfort with this new person they are becoming.

However, just as students vary in physical development, they fall along a cognitive continuum from highly concrete to formal or abstract levels of thinking. Not only do teachers find variation among students in levels of thinking but they note differences within students as well. Students who are able to write a complex persuasive essay or debate a political issue still may need to continue using objects to assist mathematical think-

ing. While learning theorists may disagree with the how and why of cognitive development, most do accept that rates of learning differ, there is a logical sequence in development, and changes in development come gradually (Woolfolk, 2001).

Reading and writing activities serve an important function as supports for helping students work through ideas, issues, questions, and concerns about this whole process of growing up. Students can read literature that challenges their ideas about the world and discuss these in small study groups. Reflective journals allow students to use writing as a way to think through personal values and beliefs. Dialogue journals offer opportunities for students to communicate privately with teachers and other significant adults as they wrestle with daily challenges. A colleague of mine suggested that all her preservice students use dialogue journals with their students. A physical education student was not sure how, or if, this would work in a P.E. class. Nevertheless, he gave it a try. At the end of the term, this budding P.E. teacher indicated that several students had thanked him for the opportunity to talk to him through their journals. One student said that this was the best P.E. class he ever had and hoped other teachers might use journals, too (Dauer, personal communication).

This is an opportune time to emphasize the development of metacognition—the ability to reflect on one's thinking and to begin regulation of one's learning processes (Flavell, 1985). An effective metacognitive thinker looks at her thinking in an objective manner—monitoring, evaluating, and making strategy adjustments when comprehension breaks down. As middle school students make the transition from totally concrete thinking to a more abstract level they can greatly benefit from instruction that helps them to develop their metacognitive knowledge. We will discuss metacognition more specifically in Chapter II.

PSYCHOSOCIAL CHANGES

Cognitive and biological changes are accompanied by significant alterations in the adolescent's attitude toward himself, peers, and family. Many psychologists agree that a major accomplishment of this period is the emergence of a stable identity (Erikson, 1963; Havighurst, 1972; Hoover, Marcia, & Parris, 1997). During this developmental period individuals must become comfortable with a new physical appearance, define male and female roles, achieve emotional independence from parents, identify personal values and beliefs, wrestle with sexuality issues, and choose a work life that is meaningful and economically viable. This "becoming a self" must be experienced and explored during a time of great cognitive, emotional, and physical change. Many adolescents and their parents feel like they are on a roller coaster ride that, while it is exciting and exhilarating, can also be at best uncomfortable and at worst downright scary.

As young people try to establish an identity it is not unusual for them to experiment with personalities and life styles. Generally, this means different hairstyles and colors, new and sometimes bizarre wardrobes, nose rings, or tattoos. One of my students who was making the transition to sixth grade asked my advice about how to develop an English accent because she liked the way it sounded and thought it would be a fun way to start middle school.

Just as adults who experience too many major events in their lives at once can have difficulty coping, adolescents—particularly the 10- to 14-year-old group—can find their coping mechanisms taxed. They become "stressed out" and try to let us know, albeit in sometimes negative ways. This is a time when parents often think that what kids want is to be left alone. When your teen holes up in his room, stomps around the house, grunts rather than talks, it is tempting to give

him a wide berth—the adult coping strategy. Coupled with the fact that adolescents spend more time outside the home and may feel that seeing their mothers at the mall or in the cafeteria at lunch while engaged with peers is a major disaster, it is easy to see why parents think this is what kids want. However, there is ample research to indicate that adolescents both need and want adults, especially parents, in their lives. Looking at adolescents who have succeeded despite severe odds against them indicates that these resilient kids had "at least one caring, supportive adult" in their lives (Benard, 1991).

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1995) suggests strongly that to assist adolescents to achieve a positive adult identity, social and business interests in the United States need to help re-engage families and their adolescent children. The council reports that in multiple surveys—regardless of culture, race, and ethnicity—young people "yearn" for parental attention and guidance as they make career decisions, develop moral values, and learn how to become adults in a confusing world. While adolescents may look to peers for styles in clothes, music, and entertainment, it is to parents, teachers, and other significant adults that they look when they are trying to determine the kind of man or woman they want to be (Carnegie Council, 1995).

TRENDS AFFECTING ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

- While surveys of adolescents indicate a need and desire for close family ties, the reality is that they actually spend less time with caring adults than in previous generations. In two-parent families, both parents generally work long hours and 50 percent of all U.S. children spend at least some of their years in one-parent families (Carnegie Council, 1995). Extended families are a thing of the past, with many grandparents and other relatives having little sustained contact with adolescents.

- Our economy is ever-shifting. The periodic boom-bust and the restructuring and downsizing that goes with it have been devastating to many workers. We now shop in a global marketplace and knowledge is as much a commodity as cars or engines. Jobs that might have paid a family wage even 10 years ago no longer exist. High school graduates who might have been successful without further education now are faced with dead-end jobs. This is demoralizing to many adolescents and their parents, especially for families who have already experienced loss of income and degraded job opportunities (Carnegie Council, 1995). Many parents wonder if their children will have better lives and this feeling of a limited future is communicated to young people.

In literacy classes, it is crucial that teachers provide information about how high levels of literacy will further their students' quality of life as well as their economic lives. While high levels of literacy are needed for postsecondary education and professional work, it is important that students understand that the trades also require substantial literacy skill. Mechanics, electricians, plumbers, and members of other skilled trades require the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. Many jobs that formerly required minimal skills will be completed by robots. Individuals working in robotic manufacturing plants will also need to be more highly skilled so that they can program and maintain the robotic units.

Most students these days are veteran drivers on the Internet highway. In addition to time spent surfing the Net, young adolescents listen to music, go to movies, and watch videos and television. These literacies represent the

social and cultural milieu in which our adolescents live, but they are often not included in the school curriculum. Teachers need to consider how exploration of multiple literacies in the classroom might give their students a voice that all too often is missing in middle schools (Phelps, 1998).

- A number of reports that have surfaced during the last decade show that the United States is a truly multiethnic, multiracial, and multilingual nation. The Carnegie Council (1995) estimates that by 2050, almost 50 percent of the American population will be nonwhite and not of European American descent. This in itself is not problematic but the difficulty Americans have coming together on crucial issues is a matter for concern. Adolescents need adult support and guidance on ways to live harmoniously while respecting the differences among our population.

- According to the Carnegie Council report (1995) there are special concerns related to adolescents from 10 to 14. Parents and teachers indicate that drug use and sexual activity have moved down the age ranges to the 10- to 13-year-old group. The rate of assaults, homicides, and suicides for this younger age group has increased. From 1980 to 1992 there was a 120 percent increase in suicides for children aged 10 to 14 (Carnegie Council, 1995).

  By age 18, 25 percent of adolescents have engaged in behaviors that have both immediate and long-term consequences—addiction, pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, petty crime (Carnegie Council, 1995). This group includes adolescents from all types of families—affluent and highly educated to poor and undereducated. However, in poor neighborhoods adolescents have little access to quality medical care, psychological counseling and, in too many instances, quality education.

While the previous discussion of trends and happenings might feel like a dark cloud descending on our children's future, there are ways we can support our young people to seek positive models, engage in personally enhancing behavior, and develop an identity and outlook that will serve them well throughout their lives. The Carnegie Council report (1995) makes the following recommendations for society to ensure the best for our kids:

- Re-engage families with their adolescent children
- Create developmentally appropriate schools for adolescents
- Develop health promotion strategies for young adolescents
- Strengthen communities with young adolescents
- Promote the constructive potential of the media

Nurturing middle schools can assist young adolescents to make the transition to young adulthood by being places where students are expected to reach their potential, where they can try on new roles and personalities, where they can define and redefine themselves and, most important, where they are cared for and respected.

Chapter II
New Learning Paradigms for a New Millennium

... We have not been cognizant of the ways in which the basic inclinations of human learning turn out to be ill matched to the agenda of the modern secular school.

—Howard Gardner (1993)

Learning is what human beings do to survive. Learning begins at birth (some argue that it happens earlier) and continues throughout life. Some of what we learn is hardwired into our human genes, such as talking and walking. Some of what we learn is planned, like learning to play the guitar or how to solve a quadratic equation. Sometimes we learn without meaning to, like the toothpaste jingle that won't stop repeating in our heads. Whether intentional or not, learning is a permanent change in what we know or what we do. What makes learning different from growing size 10 feet is that it results from our experiences with people, objects, and events.

THEORIES OF LEARNING AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Many educators have little patience with the concept of theory, often connecting it to some abstract set of ideas that has no bearing on the reality of the classroom. However, whether we like it or not we all move through life on the basis of the theories we develop about the world we live in. We test the hypotheses generated by personal theories all the time. It is how we decide to cross the street (or not), invest money in stocks or a lottery ticket, buy a house in the city or a nest in the country. And theoretical assumptions (conscious or not) are at the heart of our decisions about

- How we define what we teach
- The way we organize and plan our instruction
- The way we relate to our students and to each other

It is crucial that we examine our beliefs and values regarding how students learn, why they learn, and under what conditions their learning is maximized. Let's briefly review what researchers, theorists, and researcher-practitioners have discovered about the ways human beings learn to navigate their worlds.

Behavioral Theory

Until the middle of this century, human learning was conceived as a process in which individuals reacted to environmental stimuli and habitual responses were formed depending on whether the individual achieved a positive or negative result. The emphasis was on observation of learner behavior, primarily animals, in experimental

situations in which researchers controlled the variables. For example, cats in a box learned to press a lever for food because when they did they were rewarded with tasty morsels and if they did not press the correct lever they received a painful shock. Researchers observed that animals increased behaviors that brought positive or pleasurable results. This idea is called connectionism, which refers to the established stimulus-response connection that results in a "habit" being formed (Thorndike, 1913). The idea that practice makes perfect derives from connectionism.

B.F. Skinner (1953) developed a complex theory of behavior called operant conditioning, which has had a substantial influence on education, especially with special populations of students. Like most behavioral research the principles of reinforcement, behavioral consequences, and the role of antecedent behaviors were developed from experiments with animals. Skinner maintained that behaviors could be predicted and controlled through an appropriate schedule of reinforcement (Skinner, 1953).

Skinner developed an educational application of his theory called programmed instruction. Students were presented with incremental tasks; when they were successful with one part, they moved on to another part of the learning task. Organization of complex tasks into discrete skills became entrenched in classrooms. Mathematics and reading were delineated into a list of skills to be mastered and integrated into a complex performance. Teachers were encouraged to focus on behavioral objectives that could be directly observed and measured. Standardized tests became the primary assessment of student learning (Crain, 1985).

However, neo-behaviorists, such as Albert Bandura have conducted research and offered a theory that expands on past conceptions. Bandura's social learning theory (1977) emphasizes the importance of modeling as a way of learning. Individuals can learn from direct experience with a skill or process. One example might be a Navajo child who spends time watching her grandmother weave or create a sand painting, practices with the expert grandmother, and over time learns to weave a blanket or create a sand painting on her own. Individuals can also learn vicariously, that is, through text, film, video, and stories. Bandura has expanded original behavioral theory into a social cognitive perspective that recognizes the importance of social interaction, focused attention, self-efficacy, and scaffolding to optimize learning (Bandura, 1977).

Teachers use Bandura's ideas every time they model or demonstrate a learning process. Using think-alouds in reading, for example, helps students to understand that they should be asking questions when they read, visualizing, and making connections to other books or their own life experiences.

During the past 30 years, theorists and researchers from many fields of inquiry have broadened our conceptions of learning to include internal processes, such as thinking and feeling. Psycholinguistics examined assumptions about language processes emphasizing an active and intentional role for language learners (Pearson & Stephens, 1994). From this perspective and the parallel research of sociolinguistics, we have learned that:

- Human beings construct meaning from their life experiences
- Language is used for purposeful interaction with others
- There is a dynamic relationship among language processes (reading, listening, speaking, and writing)
- There is more to context than the words on a page

(Braunger & Lewis, 1997; Pearson & Stephens, 1994; Rosenblatt, 1994)

Sociolinguists challenged the conventional use of context in literacy. Prior conceptions of context were limited to the text—the physical marks on the page. Current theorists view context as part of the social process that includes the learner, the material to be learned, instructors, and other aspects of the environment in which the learning is situated (Pearson & Stephens, 1994).

The ideas of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Jerome Bruner have changed the way we look at learners. In constructivism (the idea that we construct our own knowledge), learners are viewed as active participants in the learning process as they use their prior experiences and knowledge to make sense of new information and events. Indeed, making sense of the environment is an essential brain function—necessary for our survival. The idea that making sense of the world is a primary human activity is supported by brain research. Historically, our survival has depended on our ability to detect patterns and determine relationships among objects, people, and events. Leslie Hart defines learning as the "extraction from confusion of meaningful patterns" (1983). This means that as we mature we gradually become experts at creating useful information out of what is a complex and often chaotic world. However, our level of expertise in sifting through this sensory data will depend on the knowledge and experience that we bring to the situation. This appears to be a natural process and can be readily observed as learners pursue topics of novelty and high interest (Hart, 1983).

Learning and the Brain

While research in cognition has produced viable theories, only recently have we been able to see what happens in the human brain when learning is going on. Fast Magnetic Resonance Imaging (FMRI) allows us to observe the brain during cognitive activity and positron emission tomography (PET) indicates how and where the brain processes a series of events (Sylwester, 1995).

The brain processes information in a parallel fashion, looking for emerging patterns. Through the emotional components of the brain our attention is focused on novel or dramatic changes in our environment. Our attention system is quick and effective as a survival mechanism, but it is less helpful in a stable environment, like a classroom, where change is gradual.

Physical changes occur in the brain as we grow in experience. This means that, while we all start out with a generic brain, individual life experiences change the physical structure of the brain, making each person's brain unique. We can, and do, learn to engage in things that require an individual's sustained attention and precision, but our brain prefers cooperation and conversation, conceptualization and storytelling as ways to learn (Sylwester, 1995).

Another aspect of brain research to consider as we plan optimal environments for adolescents is the idea of critical periods for learning. Critical periods of development relate primarily to species-wide systems like vision, hearing, and language. Human beings appear to develop specific aspects of visual, auditory, and language systems along a continuum. Some readers do not make sense of sound-symbol relationships until upper elementary or middle school, although they are able to make meaning from pictures and text. For example, several years ago a seven-year-old boy was brought to reading clinic by his parents who were concerned because he was failing reading. Assessment of decoding skill indicated that the child was unable to connect sounds with the graphemes representing the sounds. However, after reading several passages from an IRI the youngster was able to answer all the comprehension questions up to fourth-grade level which was two years above his grade placement. Oral

retellings after reading passages from trade books also indicated high levels of comprehension but miscue analysis showed limited use of the graphophonic cueing system. This boy seemed to have an intuitive understanding of our alphabetic system but could not articulate this knowledge. We do not quite understand how this happens. Currently, there is only evidence that there are critical periods for many human functions but they vary within the same system (Bruer, 1998). This implies that we should maintain flexible timetables for student learning since not only do we develop skills at different rates but development within skill areas may vary.

Sociocultural Theory

Research growing out of the sociocultural theory of Lev Vygotsky also has had a significant impact on how we organize learning situations and the roles of the teacher and the student in the learning environment. Vygotsky maintained that "every function of the child's cultural development appears twice: on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological) ... all the higher functions originate as actual relations between human beings" (Vygotsky, 1978). This indicates that meaning is constructed with and through others.

The dialogue or "instructional conversation" facilitates meaningful learning (Tharp & Gallimore, 1989). Learning takes place as the novice (student) moves from assistance from an expert (teacher or peer) to independent action or understanding. The distance between the need for assistance and independent functioning is the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). An example of working with the zone of proximal development is learning to ride a bike. Most six-year-olds cannot manage a two-wheeled bicycle on their own. Parents start by modeling riding for the child so she can see what an expert performance looks like. Parents then provide support for maintaining the upright position, steering the bicycle, and keeping it in motion. As the child gains more control over the bicycle, the parent begins to relinquish assistance in a series of steps. The parent moves from holding and guiding to running along as the child becomes a rider. The message from Vygotsky is model, support, and gradually release responsibility to the child. We will come back to this idea of gradual release of responsibility when we discuss explicit teaching of comprehension in Chapter III.

Metacognition and Self-Regulation

Other research has examined human awareness and control over the executive processes of learning. Metacognition is an executive learning process defined as "knowledge and beliefs accumulated through experience and stored in long-term memory that relate to the human mind and its activities" (Flavell, 1985). The ability to plan, and to monitor understanding and effectiveness of learning strategies correlates with overall cognitive development (Flavell, 1985). The research in metacognition and metalinguistics has contributed to new understandings of literacy that recognize the importance of individuals coming to know themselves as readers and writers and to use this knowledge to implement learning strategies that optimize their understandings of text. Metacognitive research suggests that learning becomes more conscious and self-regulated as individuals grow in experience (Flavell, 1985).

The primary goal of any educational endeavor is to assist the learner to achieve control of the learning process. When learners regulate cognitive and affective processes for maximum understanding they are metacognitively skilled readers (Pressley, 2002). Since wide experience with text is crucial to development of metacognitive knowledge and skill, the admonition of researchers to read extensively in a variety of genres is good

advice. However, it is also important for many students to have teachers provide explicit instruction in metacognitive processes if we are to have highly sophisticated readers (Pressley, 2002; Schoenbach, et al., 1999).

Metacognitive knowledge develops over time with guidance from parents, teachers, and peers. It is information that we have about ourselves, the tasks we engage in, and the strategies that we know and use. Knowledge about ourselves tells us what we are good at—creating analogies, completing fill-in-the-blanks tests, or understanding that we need an outline to focus. Task knowledge involves our way of assessing the difficulty level of an assignment. Strategy knowledge includes the ways we remember information, how we access information, and changing pace when reading difficult material (Garner, 1994).

As I synthesized the research on learning, several principles emerged that made sense in terms of classroom instruction. These principles include construction of meaning, active engagement, and meaningful content. These principles applied to literacy provide a game plan for tackling the challenge of ensuring that students become actively engaged with content and develop a deep understanding of subject matter. The table on the next page outlines the characteristics of the principles and identifies researchers and theorists associated with each principle. It is important to note that these principles are separated only for the purpose of thinking through the scope of the learning process. In fact, when learning is optimal all areas will be integrated. In Chapter III, we will use these principles as a lens to identify ways to enhance literacy learning for all our children.

Learning Principles That Support Optimal Literacy Learning

Key Principles	Defining Characteristics
Construction of Meaning	
Bandura, A., 1977 Bruner, J., 1977 Dewey, J., 1938 Palincsar, A.M., & Brown, A., 1984 Pearson, P.D., & Stephens, D., 1994 Perkins, D., & Blythe, T., 1994 Piaget, J., 1952 Rumelhart, D.E, 1977 Vygotsky, L., 1978	• Knowledge is dynamic and individually constructed in a social context • Learning occurs through active construction and reconstruction of prior knowledge and experience • The learner's own efforts to understand are at the heart of the educational process • Emphasis is on complex, challenging learning environments
Active Engagement	
Bauman, J., & Duffy, A., 1997 Cambourne, B., 1995 Guthrie, J.T., & Wigfield, A., 1997 McCombs, B., & Whisler, J., 1997 Meier, D., 1995 Perrone, V., 1994	• Learning is both hands-on and minds-on • Prior and current experiences are integrated • Learners believe they can accomplish the task (efficacy) • Learners use effective strategies to complete tasks • Learning is connected to student interest as well as needs • Individuals have some degree of control over their learning
Meaningful Content	
Gardner, H., 1993 Hart, L., 1983 Newmann, F.M., & Wehlage, G.G., 1995 Perkins, D., & Blythe, T., 1994 Wiggins, G., & McTighe, K., 1998	• Ideas are crucial to a deep understanding of the subject area • Topics have the potential to engage students through exploration of essential questions, connecting ideas, or reorienting initial ideas • Topics generate new questions and new understanding • Topics or ideas have relevance and value outside the classroom • Themes/topics are of interest to teachers and students

Chapter III
Creating Optimal Literacy Environments for Young Adolescents

Worldwide success of adult literacy programs provides clear evidence that one can be taught to read at any age from late preschool through adulthood.

—Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998)

Schools that are developmentally appropriate provide a core curriculum and teaching methods that excite students' curiosity, build on their desire to explore, strengthen their analytical and problem-solving abilities, and provide an understanding of human biology and its place in the world.

—Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1995)

It is easy to become overwhelmed by negative press, sluggish test scores, and reduced school budgets that enlarge classes and reduce resources. Despite these odds, educators who are passionate about literacy and learning are bringing students to understand and appreciate the power of language and literacy in their lives. Instead of seeing students as unmotivated and unable to participate in classroom life, these teachers are looking to the qualities of adolescents to organize environments that are enticing, engaging, energizing, and equitable (Schoenbach, et al., 1999).

We learned in our exploration of adolescent development that young people are focused on social interaction, are at the threshold of cognitive complexity, are fascinated by psychosocial changes, and have avid interests and needs. In this section, we will examine how we can connect the social, cognitive, personal, and knowledge-building dimensions of adolescence to high levels of literacy development for all students (Schoenbach, et al., 1999).

The themes identified from research on learning match well with what research in literacy acknowledges to be crucial if students are to develop the "ability to use language, content, and reasoning in ways that are appropriate for particular situations and disciplines" (Langer, 2000). As indicated earlier these themes are:

- Construction of meaning
- Active engagement
- Meaningful content

Literacy practices that are successful with students will include many or all of these principles. They operate in an integrative fashion rather than in isolation.

CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING

Reading and writing are complex cognitive processes that involve not only texts and readers but also the local and larger community context. In *Reading for Understanding* (Snow, 2002), comprehension (understanding or discovering meaning) is identified as the defining activity of the reading process.

We will look first at the cognitive processes that have substantial influence on an individual's ability to create meaning through reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Cognitive psychologists focus on how humans acquire knowledge and how knowledge is represented and stored in memory. Let's focus on two intersecting lines of research: information processing and memory or schema networks.

Information processing researchers have focused on how skilled adults operate both in their areas of specialty and in more conventional situations. Mature adult thinkers possess substantial amounts of world knowledge, are highly strategic in their approaches to problem solving, and are motivated to take on new tasks and challenges (Pressley, El-Dinary, & Brown, 1992). An individual who processes information well blends her knowledge of specific domains (and more general knowledge) together with the use of strategies geared to complete a particular task. We can say that this thinker/reader/writer uses prior knowledge that includes existing beliefs, experiences, and extensive content and strategic knowledge to complete school, work, and leisure tasks (Kujawa & Huske, 1995). The more we know about a topic or an idea, the more we are likely to learn when we are presented with more complex forms of the idea or process.

Another theoretical position within the cognitive realm supports the idea that individuals construct schemes or categories of knowledge based on direct and indirect experience (Rumelhart, 1977). Various categories of information are stored and connected in schema networks. For example, a young child with a pet cat or dog has developed lots of ideas (schemata) about these animals based on everyday experience. The child has a schema for pets, albeit a limited one. As the child encounters other animals as pets—guinea pigs, ferrets, parrots, etc.—the concept of pet (schema) is enlarged. When new information is integrated into a schema, learning takes place. Presentation of a new idea can evoke several schema networks, and effective organization and storage of schemata depend on the individual's connecting what is known to the new information (Rumelhart, 1977). Schema theory suggests learners actively construct knowledge by comparing prior knowledge and experience with incoming information and then reorganizing data to form new and enlarged schemata.

There are a variety of metaphors that might work to explain just how memory or schemata work. Let's think of a computer in which there are major programs that we use effectively because we have lots of practice or experience. Within these programs there are folders with categories of information and within each folder are files that contain bits and pieces of information. Some individuals have megaprograms with lots of folders that are then networked to other programs in an intricate organization. How effectively we have organized and stored our information will determine how easily we can access the material. In order to keep track of our folders and files we continually reorganize, re-file, and re-name. So what does this mean for learning to read, write, and learn subject matter?

Kids at all levels come to school with files and even folders of files in their heads. However, they do not all have the same information in their files and they do not have them organized or labeled in the same way. So, before we can help students

learn new processes and information we have to know what material is already there, how the information is arranged, and whether or not kids know how to get it out when they need it.

Assessing student prior knowledge and assisting students to activate their prior knowledge before engaging in learning tasks is essential if comprehension is to occur.

Frontloading To Activate Prior Knowledge

There are a variety of ways that teachers can help students to connect what they know to what we want them to learn. Techniques used prior to reading/teaching may be referred to as frontloading (Buehl, 2001).

ADVANCE ORGANIZERS

The concept of the advance organizer was developed by David Ausubel who emphasized meaningful verbal learning rather than the rote learning that has often passed for learning in middle and secondary classrooms (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001). The purpose of the organizer is to present a narrative to students that provides concrete examples of ideas. The story shows the connections between the examples and helps students to organize the complex information.

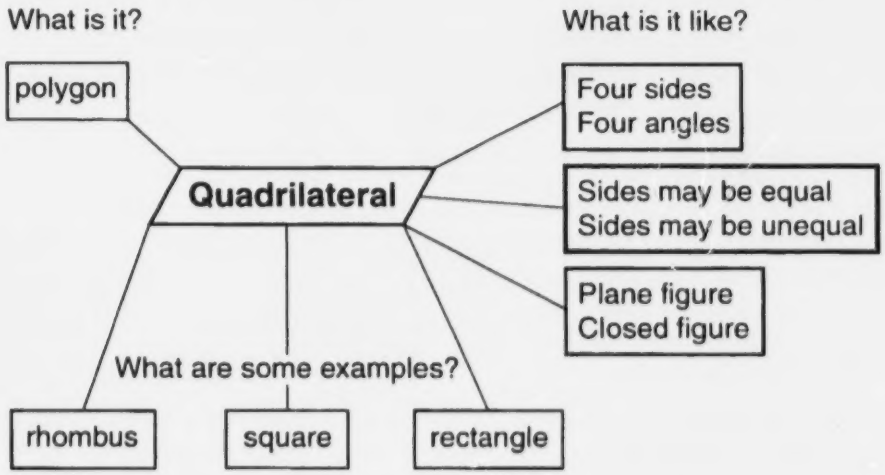
Example:

The relationship between a colony and the mother country is similar to that of a child in a family. Like parents, the mother country sets the rules for behavior, supports the child, and protects it from outsiders. This works well in the establishment of colonies but just like developing children, new colonies begin to want more status and independence. This often can cause resentment and the child will move to separate itself from the parent's influence. There are important differences as well. Colonies are already separate entities and generally include many types of people who are not related. Since families usually have positive feelings toward their offspring's move to adulthood, the event happens often with celebration. Colonies, however, often only achieve independence through violent revolution. This was the case between the American colonies and Great Britain.

The advance organizer connects to ideas and feelings that students have about family relationships and connects this to the concept of colony. Differences and similarities are identified.

GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

The National Reading Panel (2000) evaluated the effectiveness of visual representations as ways to help students organize ideas and remember information, especially for expository materials. Findings for students in grades six through eight were positive. There are a variety of graphic organizers that can be developed by both teachers and students. A concept definition map is useful for activating prior knowledge and organizing ideas prior to reading.



Concept Definition Map (Buehl, 2001). This strategy helps activate prior knowledge as well as introducing key content vocabulary. The information included in the map is based on a series of questions: what is the target concept (category), what defines the concept, what are examples of the concept. Above is an example of a concept map for a quadrilateral.

BRAINSTORMING TO EVOKE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

LINK (Buehl, 2001) stands for list, inquire, note, and know. This technique is a modified version of Carr and Ogle's (1987) K-W-L plus strategy. The process is as follows: Identify a key concept from the reading and write on an overhead or chalkboard. Students then have three minutes to list all the associations they have for the concept. These ideas are then shared and recorded on the chart or overhead. Students are encouraged to ask each other clarifying questions and to share what their understandings may be. After the discussion all information is removed and students are asked to write their definition of the concept in their own words. Examples for middle school students might be the concept of independence:

freedom	no rules	July 4, 1776
my own room	**Independence**	make my own decisions
revolution	Che Guevara	Philadelphia

List-Group-Label (Taba, 1967) involves brainstorming, comparing and contrasting, and categorizing information. If the target concept were climate, for example, the students would brainstorm associations for this term: tropical, humidity, tundra, permafrost, rain forest, precipitation, and so forth. Students would then work to identify common characteristics so that the items can be categorized by types of climate, geographic locations, specific characteristics. It is helpful to put these items in a matrix so that students can use the data to discuss more complex issues concerning climate.

Climate Type	Characteristics	Geographic Locations	Flora	Fauna
Tropical				
High Desert				
Temperate				
Arctic				

There are many varied strategies for helping students to connect with text and to use what they know to move the new knowledge into more complex understandings.

Fluency and Comprehension

The National Reading Panel (NRP) (2000) emphasized the importance of a reader's ability to read with reasonable speed, accuracy, and expression appropriate to the textual material. We recognize fluency as one of the traits of a proficient reader. However, according to a national study of fourth-graders described by the NRP, 44 percent of these students performed at low fluency levels and exhibited lower comprehension levels (National Reading Panel ([NRP], 2000). It appears that fluency is an essential element for optimal understanding of text.

Fluency depends heavily on well-developed word recognition skills but excellent decoding ability is not a guarantee of fluency (NRP, 2000). Disfluency's effect on comprehension may be related to the function of short-term memory as we read. If decoding skills are automatic, little effort is required for processing letter or word level information. Since the average individual can hold only seven to 10 bits of information in short-term memory, the disfluent reader expends cognitive energy primarily on figuring out words and pronunciations. This leaves little memory capacity to focus on comprehending the information (Pressley, 2000).

Using Jeanne Chall's Stage Development Theory, Curtis and Longo (1999b) indicate that approximately 12 percent of the adolescents in the Boys Town Reading Center operate at stage two. Stage two of Chall's theory is called confirmation, that is, students are becoming more adept at decoding and beginning to move toward fluency. This inability to use automatic processes in reading has a severe impact on their ability to understand classroom reading materials (Curtis & Longo, 1999b). When students must work so hard merely to identify words on a page, reading is seen as a meaningless and frustrating task. It is easy to see why such students might disengage from reading in particular and learning in general. These

researchers suggest that teachers select reading materials carefully to draw in students and encourage further effort.

The NRP (2000) review of the research on techniques showed that repeated readings with assistance and feedback can improve fluency and, in turn, comprehension. For younger students repeated reading with feedback from the teacher or an older student seemed more effective than independent reading. Improvement in word recognition and fluency had a positive impact on comprehension for all levels and types of readers (NRP, 2000).

Samuels (2002) indicates that there is abundant support for extensive independent reading as a means to develop fluency. The National Reading Panel did not endorse extensive reading to develop fluency primarily because there were few experimental studies that provided data on which to make an evaluation (Samuels, 2002). There is a substantial body of research showing a strong positive correlation between extent of reading, fluency, and comprehension (Samuels, 2002). However, both Samuels (2002) and the National Reading Panel (2000) emphasize the importance of coupling wide independent reading with regular, explicit instruction.

It is apparent that fluency is important to comprehension of text but it is also crucial not to confuse fluency with decoding. Schoenbach and colleagues (1999) suggest that not only is fluency developmental but that it varies with the type of text, text difficulty, and the knowledge that students bring to the reading task. If readers are not familiar with text structures, language structures, and text content then information processing becomes slower and more labored with possible breakdown in comprehension (Schoenbach, et al., 1999).

Creating Meaning Through Strategic Reading

In our earlier discussion we learned that proficient readers, writers, and thinkers have substantial background knowledge, which they activate when presented with new ideas and principles to read, write, and think about. Another aspect of proficient reading and thinking is the knowledge and use of relevant strategies to increase understanding of text.

Middle school teachers find that many students have limited strategies to effectively navigate the texts used in the core curriculum. This is not a situation that pertains only to struggling readers. Even proficient sixth-grade readers need substantial assistance to meet the academic obligations of middle school. Often these proficient readers have declarative and procedural knowledge of strategies, that is, they know what some of them are and how they work. However, they do not have conditional knowledge, the when and why of strategies (Pearson & Fielding, 1991). What strategies do proficient readers use and how can we assist students to use them appropriately for maximum benefit to comprehension?

In classrooms that foster comprehension, teachers help students to connect reading and writing to their own knowledge and experience. They think out loud to model the mental processes they use while reading, and explicitly teach strategies that target the thinking that occurs during reading. More than 40 studies that use a think-aloud process to examine reader processing as they read text (Pressley, 2002) indicate that readers:

- **Set a purpose or a goal for the learning activity.** Proficient readers decide what their reading stance will be, that is, they know how and why they are approaching the text. In classrooms the goals may be locating information, learning the material to recall on a test, or gathering information for a character

analysis. Good readers rarely just jump into text. They know the nature of the task that must be completed and set their reading antennae to what will most effectively get them to their destination (Pressley, 2002; Snow, 2002).

If the reader is looking for a phone number the skimming strategy might be activated. Skimming also lets the reader know if this piece of text is relevant to the goal to be achieved and which sections of text are important to the goal. This is especially important for research tasks. Proficient readers also know as they begin reading that the purpose or goals of the activity may need to be modified or even discarded (Snow, 2002).

- **Activate prior knowledge and experience.** Students who are actively engaged in reading activate prior knowledge and experience at a number of points throughout the reading activity. This is the way the reader makes initial connections to the ideas in texts. Activation facilitates development of predictions of what knowledge will be gained, and also affects the continuing reader stance and possible motives to proceed with the reading task (Pressley, 2002; Rosenblatt, 1994).

  Readers activate knowledge about text as well as general or specific subject knowledge (Pearson & Fielding, 1991). For example, as students skim a text they identify words that signal ways of processing material—the reason that the colonists ... was because ...; steps in the process are ...; there were several ideas about the atom, the first was ..., and so forth. These syntactical structures assist the reader to uncover the mental models embedded in text (Snow, 2002).

- **Ask questions of themselves, the authors, and the texts, before, during, and after reading.** This is the beginning of the transaction that leads to the creation of meaning. Questions relate to speculations about the text to be read. They also serve to clarify the meaning of individual vocabulary and of large chunks of text (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Students who use questioning during reading in small study groups are able to help each other elaborate on the ideas found in the text and to identify relevant and extraneous information (Palincsar & Brown, 1984).

- **Create visual and other sensory images from text.** Effective readers also use techniques to help them assimilate information and organize it in ways that will enhance future recall. They create mental images to facilitate their understanding. Graphic representations have been found to be very useful for both information storage and easy access to that information. Several studies support the use of graphic representations of major ideas in a text to facilitate student understanding (NRP, 2000). Story mapping and concept mapping show positive impacts on student comprehension of text (NRP, 2000).

- **Retell or synthesize information in the text.** Students who paraphrase or summarize, discover the main idea, and attempt to put ideas together to form an integrated synopsis have greater overall understanding of textual information and greater ability to recall the information in the future (Pressley, 2002; Snow, 2002).

- **Use a variety of fix-up strategies to repair comprehension when it breaks down.** The metacognitive awareness of good readers operates at high levels (Pressley, 2002). They consistently monitor comprehension, especially in challenging text. When they recognize barriers to understanding they take steps to remedy the problem. These steps may include slowing

their pace, rereading a section of text, checking the meaning of a term they have decided is crucial, or making marginal notes.

(Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Pressley, 2002; Snow, 2002)

Metacognition becomes a primary factor for middle school reading because students are able to move outside themselves to see how they learn. Teachers can begin discussions about what works for students as they try to understand textbooks, journals, magazines, or videos.

Motivation is also connected to metacognitive knowledge and experience. Students who are not engaged in a cognitive task, such as reading or calculating, are unlikely to invest the time and cognitive energy to optimize understanding. Students like this persist in a task to simply complete it regardless of whether they understand the task or the viability of the outcome (Garner, 1994).

Middle school readers who struggle with text often have not learned that reading is supposed to make sense. They often focus on word level skills rather than comprehension and barriers to understanding pass unnoticed. They literally don't know that they don't know (Garner, 1994).

Gradual Release of Responsibility: A Model for Comprehension Instruction

This model, originally conceptualized by Pearson and Gallagher in 1983, identifies essential components of comprehension instruction (Duke & Pearson, 2002). The model rests on two important ideas from learning theory—"scaffolding" in the cognitive view or what, in the neo-behavioral view, is called "fading" (Woolfolk, 2001). In the scaffolding or fading process the initial learning is mediated or controlled by the instructor. This is done through:

- Modeling literacy behaviors
- Making processes transparent through think-alouds
- Practicing with students and providing feedback

Finally, teachers provide many opportunities to use the strategy independently in meaningful literacy events. Let's examine how this might look in a classroom in which the teacher is helping students to develop visualization as a strategy for understanding and remembering text (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Hoyt & Bird, 2000).

Step 1—EXPLICIT Description of the Strategy and Why and How To Use It (Duke & Pearson, 2002)

When I read something new I get lots of images in my mind about the words and the ideas the author presents. I try to VISUALIZE what the author is saying. For example, in the book I am reading (The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle) *the first sentence says: "a thirteen-year-old girl accused of murder, brought to trial, and found guilty." I visualize a slight girl with fear in her eyes; sometimes I draw a picture of what I see in my head. Visualizing as you read can be a powerful way to help you understand what is happening. You should do this often when you read. Today we are going to use visualization by stopping every three pages and looking to see images about the story in our mind's eye.*

Step 2—Teacher and Student Modeling of the Strategy (Duke & Pearson, 2002)

Let's look at another page in Charlotte Doyle. *(It says I turned to see an old black man who, in the light of a lantern he was holding, looked like the imp of death in search of souls). I picture how folks look when they look in a mirror with a flashlight under the chin—it is eerie and scary. What a gothic drawing that would make. Students then would be encouraged to read a few lines and share what they see in their minds' eye.*

Step 3—Collaborative Practice
(Duke & Pearson, 2002)
The teacher reads more of the story, stopping at intervals to ask for student visualizations of the text. At this point students will begin accepting some of the responsibility for learning.

Step 4—Guided Practice
(Duke & Pearson, 2002)
Students read in small groups of two to three. Students are given small sticky notes for each of the next five pages of text. "As you read jot down an image that comes to mind on each of the pages. After you have completed five pages share your images with your team members. How are they alike? How are they different? What reasons might there be for differences?" Students then return to the larger group and share their visualizations and their group discussion.

Step 5—Independent Practice
(Duke & Pearson, 2002)

> *We are now moving into our silent reading period for today. As you read remember what we have been doing with visualization. Be sure to use this strategy at least every five pages as you read. Draw images also if that is helpful to you.*

Linda Hoyt and Lois Bridges Bird (2002) have added a sixth step called Reflection to the model. In the previous example, sometime later in the literacy session, students would discuss how the strategy worked for them. How useful was it? Were there situations when it was not useful? Are there texts that are so full of verbal images that it is difficult to implement the strategy? Not only do students practice a useful strategy, they are also developing metacognitive knowledge. They are identifying the conditions under which the strategy is most helpful. This is the point at which the teacher completely releases responsibility for learning to the student.

Duke and Pearson (2002) point out that it is important that each strategy highlighted during explicit instruction be recognized as one of a body of strategies that lead to good comprehension. Students should come to the understanding that choices of strategy are based on the type of text, text difficulty, the purpose for reading, and the effectiveness of the strategy for the reader's full comprehension.

When teachers use explicit instruction in decoding, they typically use texts that include sound-symbol relationships that will be useful as illustrations of English word and sentence patterns. The same holds true for explicit comprehension instruction. If, for example, teachers are assisting students to develop hypothesizing/prediction strategies, then the text should be new to the students, have a definitive sequence, and contain enough information to provide students with opportunities to make viable predictions (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

Another consideration is text difficulty. If the text contains difficult vocabulary, requires substantial prior knowledge, and contains unfamiliar text structures then the cognitive demands of the text will make learning the strategy very difficult (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

Teachers also should include a variety of interesting texts that students can use to practice the strategy. These should include quality literature, subject area texts, and texts that students may read at home but are not typically found in the classroom—comics, joke books, teen magazines, music (lyrics), and movie books.

In a recent article, Villaume and Brabham (2002) analyzed conversations of colleagues on the Reading Teacher listserv related to strategy instruction and motivation to engage in text. They concluded that the reason teachers engage with texts is because the experience is empowering. The read-

ing experience is a way to explore personal worlds and to confront issues that may alter perspectives and individual ways of viewing both personal and professional lives. They concluded that the real reason teachers should provide strategy instruction for students is to help them to be part of that shared, empowering experience.

It is possible to involve students in strategy instruction that results in no deeper engagement in the reading experience. Students are quite adept at giving us what we say we want—responses in journals, books filled with sticky notes that carry dutiful predictions (Villaume & Brabham, 2002). It is crucial to help students learn the strategies that proficient readers know and use, but we must infuse this instruction with ways to alter students' stance toward reading. Our instruction should move students to understand the power of the WORD and how people become disenfranchised without the power that literacy offers them (Villaume & Brabham, 2002). We need to look at how motivation affects strategy use and how explicit strategy instruction affects different types of learners. This is essential if adolescents are to see themselves as powerful, efficacious, and confident learners.

Research on readers who struggle with text support the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Paris, Lipson, & Wixon, 1994; Pearson & Fielding, 1991; Pressley, 2002). However, some research indicates that explicit strategy instruction may have different outcomes for high-achieving readers. Proficient readers appear to understand text at higher levels when they use strategies they have developed that work for them. Imposition of other strategies may actually have a negative effect (Dole, Brown, & Trathen, 1996). What is important to remember is that strategy instruction is to help students clarify text for optimal understanding; it is not an end in itself.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

"Engaged readers in classrooms or elsewhere coordinate their strategies and knowledge (cognition) within a community of literacy (social) in order to fulfill personal goals, desires, and intentions (motivation)" (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Engagement includes several factors: sense of purpose, need to understand, sense of competence and confidence, and involvement in a particular task or activity (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Research indicates, and teachers support the idea, that many students entering middle school become disengaged from academic learning. Even successful students and good readers seem to turn away from academic activities as preferred ways of spending time. A number of studies, including one by the NAEP, show a positive correlation between student achievement in reading and willingness to engage in literacy events (Curtis, 2002). Other data indicate that a little more than 30 percent of 13-year-olds and 25 percent of 17-year-olds read voluntarily outside the classroom (Curtis, 2002).

At a time when adolescents are better able to engage in complex text, become more aware of themselves as learners, and have a need to use skillful reading to learn subject matter, interest appears to subside. Some research shows that part of this turn-around occurs because students have not actually received the instruction in comprehension required to tackle more complex science, math, and social studies texts (Pressley, 2002; Snow, 2002). The demands of middle school learning soon tax students' ability to navigate the reading and writing world successfully. They hit what Schoenbach and colleagues (1999) call the literacy ceiling.

When students reach this point what they can achieve in the classroom is restricted. This means that teachers are limited in what they can accomplish with students unless they are willing to help

young people break through this ceiling. This often leads teachers to using nontextual methods to help students learn content. Of course, teachers should use a variety of materials and teaching styles to ensure student learning. However, when reading and writing requirements are substantially reduced or in some cases eliminated altogether everybody loses (Schoenbach, et al., 1999). Teachers become frustrated that they must "dumb down" ideas and students don't have the opportunity to receive the tutelage necessary to become effective readers and writers.

As we noted in our discussion of early adolescent development, there are a variety of factors that have an impact on student performance in middle school. Physiological and psychological factors do influence student motivation as they move into middle school. The new focus on social and personal aspects of the adolescent life seem to take precedence and reasons for attending school may rest more on being with friends than anything else (Anderman & Midgley, 1997).

Some researchers find that while students lose interest in "school" reading they may not be turned off to reading in general. Students who struggle with reading often read magazines, newsletters, series books, books based on movies or TV shows, and hypertext. However, this type of reading is not always validated in school and this type of material may actually not be allowed in classrooms (Ivey, 1999).

Worthy, Moorman, and Turner (1999) reported that sixth-graders in their study preferred scary books, sports magazines/books, comics and cartoons, and teen magazines. Regardless of achievement level, gender, and socioeconomic status, students in this study put scary stories on the top of the list. The authors in the scary category include R.L. Stine and Stephen King. The researchers point out that media attention and movies made from the books may be a big draw.

Ivey and Broadus (2001) surveyed nearly 1,800 sixth-graders to identify which strategies or materials would draw these students into reading. The information derived in the survey supports earlier information about student reading preferences. Students were motivated to read or engage in reading activity because:

- Teachers often read interesting books and articles aloud to the class
- Teachers maintained a variety of reading materials in the classroom including high-quality literature and nonfiction on many topics of interest
- Teachers offered many opportunities for students to choose their own reading selections
- Teachers provided silent reading time in class so students could think critically about the reading

One of the major goals of many programs to improve student reading is that students will see themselves as readers and writers. They will feel competent and confident about themselves as learners and people. As psychosocial theory and research indicate formulating a positive identity is an important job for adolescents (Woolfolk, 2001). Through literacy experiences, students can experience many ways of being and thinking.

Curtis and Longo (1999a) share an approach learned from the *Voice of Youth Advocates* magazine. The idea is to present reading to kids as a way "to try someone else's life on for size." This is a very appealing way to draw students into materials that they might otherwise ignore.

These educators looked for material that would stretch students beyond their immediate interests and found that locating suitable reading matter was not difficult. Topics included slave trading *(Something Upstairs)*, civil rights *(The Watsons Go to Birmingham)*, the Holocaust *(Escape From Warsaw)* and many others (Curtis & Longo, 1999a). The important outcome was that students came

to see reading as a way to explore ways of living and points of view that were well beyond their experience. For students with limited travel and experiential options, books are a way to make what my history professor called the Grand Tour.

In his research project on teaching for understanding, Vito Perrone (1994) identified several elements that increase comprehension and also draw students into learning. Students in the study became more engaged in learning when:

- They had some choice about what was to be studied
- They had time to reflect
- They participated in decisions about the direction of their work
- They could express learning in a variety of ways
- They actually did something with what they learned

Students involved in this way of learning not only increase achievement but also develop "habits of mind." Students at Central Park East in New York City participate actively in their education and are expected to reach sophisticated levels of learning. They learn both content and ways of thinking. They are encouraged to ask the following questions about ideas and events:

- **Connections:** Where do these ideas come from? Is this idea connected to other things?
- **Perspective:** From whose point of view is the information being presented?
- **Evidence:** How do you know what you know? What is the proof for what you are considering?
- **Supposition:** What if things were different?
- **Significance:** Why do these ideas matter? To whom do they matter? Why are we considering them?

(Meier, 1995)

This framework requires students to confront essential questions in various disciplines. Students (and teachers) determine perspectives, seek evidence, imagine other outcomes for a set of facts or events, and evaluate the significance of an event or an idea for themselves and their communities.

Research on student engagement indicates that adolescents want to be involved in work that is challenging so they can expand their thinking. Adolescents want to have some measure of control over what they read and how they express their learning. The absence of student voice in the classroom may contribute to low levels of participation, especially among students who do not connect success in school with later quality of life (Hynd, 1999).

It may be that lack of congruence between student expectations and the reality of middle school classrooms is partly to blame for the decrease in student engagement in early adolescence. At the same time students want more options and more control over learning they are met with teacher-directed learning with few options for negotiating what and how they will learn. Remember that students like to have choice in their reading materials and the activities that accompany them. Teachers are obligated to take students well beyond their personal worlds and interests, but leading as a coach or mentor may be more effective for students than more directive ways.

MEANINGFUL CONTENT

An important consideration in teaching for understanding is input—"the raw material" out of which students identify patterns and make connections to other information in memory (Hart, 1983). A deep understanding of a subject only comes through immersion in varied and complex experiences with the content in question. It is only by sifting through these experiences, discussing them with peers and teachers, and investigating and questioning assumptions that students are

led to a more fully developed understanding of what they read about in classrooms. One can, of course, tell students about a concept such as an ecosystem, but teacher explanations and examples will resonate with students only if they have at least some basic knowledge and experience of ecosystems. Certainly, students can learn the definitions involved and may even do well on a later exam. To get a true picture of a forest system (and an image is necessary for many) students need to have direct experience with the plants and animals that make up the system. They need to collect leaf and bark samples, check for purity of water in streams, track animals to identify crucial aspects of their habitat, build real models of the ecosystem, discuss their questions with experts in the field, explain to community members why some species should be protected, and so forth. This is the road to true understanding.

Marinating in Literature*

Barry Hoonan, sixth-grade teacher, Emily Dickinson School, Redmond, WA

"The class has the feel of a busy library at the start of the school day. It is welcoming and cozy. Twenty-four students sit reading at tables, on a couch, on beanbag chairs, a pleasant hum of conversation in the background. A note from Barry on the whiteboard near the couch serves as a reminder, 'I always use a soft voice.' At a desk in the corner, a graduate student quietly administers a reading interview to a student. Barry (the teacher) confers with one boy about a book the boy is reading, pulling down a wall map to point out a location critical to the story" (Braunger & Lewis, 1999).

This sixth-grade classroom is busy with students doing a variety of things—self-selected independent and buddy reading, responding to text passages in journals, preparing for a teacher conference, or getting ready for a book club session. Barry Hoonan organizes his literacy time using reader-writer workshop. At the beginning of the school year, Barry reads to the students and shares books with them that he has read and enjoyed. Students are expected to read but their reading choices are their own. During workshop sessions students are expected and encouraged to share the books and identify favorites that are passed around the group. Students are then ready to participate in the first literature study group of the semester. Selections for the groups are based on student recommendations from the wide reading they have already done (Braunger & Lewis, 1999).

Students record responses about the literature group texts in their journals. Barry shows his students his own journal, which includes many drawings as well as verbal responses. He encourages his students to use (if they choose) the Sketch to Stretch strategy (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996). Barry indicates that this is helpful to his students who struggle with reading and responding to text (Braunger & Lewis, 1999).

Students in this class are excited and enthusiastic about reading because Barry has allowed for these early adolescents to meet social, personal, and cognitive needs. He offers choice and a variety of literacy options in terms of learning and expression. Barry has high expectations of all students and finds ways to assist students who struggle not only by showing how to use different strategies but by letting the kids know he uses these strategies, too (Braunger & Lewis, 1999).

* Term coined by Ralph Fletcher, Personal Communication. Adapted from Braunger, J., & Lewis, J.P. (1999). *Using the knowledge base in reading: Teachers at work.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association. Copyright by the International Reading Association. All rights reserved.

Inquiry-Based Literacy Learning

READING APPRENTICESHIP

Reading for Understanding: A Guide to Improving Reading in Middle and High School Classrooms can help middle and secondary school teachers to engage students in the process of becoming fluent and competent readers (Schoenbach, et al., 1999). The following quote from the text sums up the reasons for designing a framework that connects what we know about adolescents to what we know about reading.

My nightmare is that many middle school students aren't reading at grade level, or if they are, they won't read the class assignments anyway. Consequently, I find myself trying to avoid getting students involved in reading by assigning as little reading as possible. I teach around reading to make sure my students understand science.

—Middle School Teacher
(Schoenbach, et al., 1999)

The framework for Reading Apprenticeship includes social, cognitive, personal, and knowledge-building dimensions. The heart of this framework, however, is what is called the Metacognitive Conversation and it is this dimension that links all the others. The goal is to "demystify" reading and to make the process transparent for students. This occurs through teacher modeling of strategies through extensive use of think-alouds. Essential to this coaching framework is the dialogue between teachers and students and students and students about reading strategies, barriers to success, and monitoring for effective comprehension (Schoenbach, et al., 1999). Some students do not know what reading is or how it happens and they think they are missing a "reading gene." Reading apprenticeship offers the modeling and conversation that Albert Bandura describes in social cognitive research and theory (Bandura, 1977).

Literacy activities offered in the apprenticeship framework, such as talking to text, close reading, reciprocal teaching, think-alouds, and critical analysis of various types of writing, illustrate how teachers can incorporate the developmental needs of young adolescents. Students are involved in:

- Collaborative learning
- Active processing of text
- Question generation before and during reading
- Instruction that provides explicit teaching and modeling of reading processes
- Lots of guided practice
- Extensive opportunities to read self-selected materials

Reading Apprenticeship has been used both as a framework for academic literacy classes and as a way to embed instruction in content area classes. Most recent findings indicate that in separate academic settings ninth-graders whose grade equivalent in October was grade seven were able to increase their grade level to late ninth grade (Greenleaf, Mueller & Cziko, 1997). A survey of students indicated that they had shifted in their understanding about reading, had developed strategies that they used frequently, and read more frequently outside class (Greenleaf, et al., 1997).

CLASSROOMS FOR AUTHORS AND INQUIRERS

Short, Harste, and Burke (1996) present a model for classroom inquiry that involves students in exploring topics from their own experiences of the world, what they have learned in school, and their families and culture. While this is not a literacy model, per se, it offers real reasons for adolescents to engage with a variety of texts, write for many audiences and, not only increase their knowledge, but also create knowledge. Through research or inquiry students solve real-world problems and present them in real-world contexts.

The approach asks students to immerse themselves in a topic that may have been group generated or may be an individual choice. For example, students who are concerned that their small school may be closed for budgetary reasons will gather facts by reading district information and newspaper articles and interviewing local administrators, teachers, parents, and other students. Research on adolescents supports the idea of immersing them in topics of interest to encourage maximum engagement in learning and literacy events (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997). If inquiry is to lead to deeper levels of understanding, students need time and knowledge to generate significant questions for investigation.

Students also investigate the many ways different disciplines use to find answers to essential questions: language, mathematics, history, and science. By looking at ideas from several perspectives learners develop broader and deeper levels of knowing and an appreciation for the inquiry processes used in different subject areas (Short, et al., 1996). It is particularly important that students understand the text structure and function of disciplines like history and science if they are going to use language effectively to learn these contents well.

Students can look at a sport such as baseball through several lenses—historical, physiological, and economic. Wiggins and McTighe (1998) indicate that to truly understand ideas in text students must develop "critical and insightful points of view." Finding the assumptions embedded in ideas and recognizing that bodies of evidence may lead to more than one point of view shows that students are becoming more mature thinkers and more critical readers.

FOSTERING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

Brown and Campione's (1996) Fostering a Community of Learners (FCL) is another variation on the inquiry structure that produces a "self-consciously active and reflective learning environment." Briefly, FCL involves individual and group inquiry, sharing expertise through a series of jigsaw activities, cross-age teaching, and consultation and participation in a "consequential task" that requires that all students have learned all the information on the inquiry topic. The entire process is built on guided discovery in which teachers ask open-ended questions and develop exploratory activities to guide students to an understanding of important concepts.

In FCL, the responsibility for learning is distributed throughout the community of learners rather than resting solely with the teacher (Brown & Campione, 1994). However, it should be pointed out that the content to be learned is derived from teacher judgment about the essential ideas in a discipline that students should learn. Students may pursue specific areas of interest (called majoring) within the overall subject but the teachers have the responsibility to set priorities in content and arrange learning situations that will let students "uncover" difficult concepts.

An important practice used in the FCL model to assist in comprehension development is Reciprocal Teaching (RT) (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). RT is a set of strategies that helps to facilitate understanding through clarifying, questioning, summarizing, and predicting. Teachers model the whole strategy for students and then gradually release responsibility to small groups of students. Practice is an essential part of the training and the idea is that individuals will eventually internalize the processes involved and then the strategy will be used only sparingly. Students in the FCL groups

use this to explore and understand science texts (Brown & Campione, 1996).

Gywnne Ellen Ash (2002) has expanded on RT by adding a critical literacy component.

In Reciprocal Teaching Plus, a fifth element is added, critically evaluating the text. Ash suggests that teachers prompt students with the following questions:

- Whose story is being told?
- Does the author indicate his/her perspective?
- Whose story is not being told?

In this way students engage with and analyze text at the same time. Both RT and RT Plus are excellent ways for students to peruse primary sources in history, science, and literature.

I-TEAMS

A group of Portland, Oregon, middle school teachers inspired by James Beane's (1995) concept of a student-responsive curriculum developed an interdisciplinary curriculum with their students (Oldani, 1995). The Interdisciplinary Team (I-Team) approach involves students brainstorming sets of questions that relate to their personal lives and social issues that concern them. After initial lists are created students work in small groups to compile personal and social questions. Teachers indicate that this part of the process makes students more secure about the kinds of questions they raise and also makes them aware of the significance of their ideas, since others have similar concerns. Students have the option of deciding methods for choosing and discarding questions to explore further.

The next step in the process is to classify the questions based on similarities and create a heading for the list. The class then debates the value and importance of the questions and comes to a group consensus about the list of questions. Team representatives are elected to debate the final list, out of which themes for the year's curriculum will be decided (Oldani, 1995). One theme that emerged from the student debate was the environment. The following questions were the focus of the study of the environment:

1. How can we save our rivers, oceans, and air from the effects of pollution?
2. How will global warming affect the environment?
3. How will future technology affect our natural resources?
4. What will happen to endangered species?

This format for teaching includes several key elements of the research on literacy learning in adolescence. Students are engaged in activities that are both challenging and based on personal interest. They have definitive purposes for reading and writing and engage in multiple literacy tasks. The content is certainly important and worthy of serious inquiry and supports concerns of the larger community. Reading and writing activities involve complex ideas. Students are involved in collaborative efforts from the beginning of the project and students develop metacognitive awareness as they join in conversations with their peers and teachers.

PRAGMATIC LITERACY FRAMEWORK

Often teachers find inquiry frameworks and literacy workshop difficult to implement in their classrooms. This is especially true of new teachers who have limited experience and are concerned with maintaining control over the classroom environment. Ash (2002) has developed a framework that can be used as a planning guide for teachers who work with readers who struggle with literacy, as well as those students who are moving at an acceptable pace.

The framework arises from practices used in various successful tutoring programs and is then con-

nected to critical literacy practices (Ash, 2002). Reading and writing are integrated at certain points in the framework. The classroom practices included in the framework are:

- Daily oral or shared reading
- Teacher- and peer-led guided reading (flexible grouping)
- Word study in guided reading groups
- Self-selected reading and writing
- Comprehension strategy instruction

Ash (2002) encourages teachers to use this as a decisionmaking tool. The table below shows each general practice with suggestions for literacy activities that would help students develop in these areas.

Ash (2002) provides many research-based ideas that teachers could include in both word study and comprehension instruction.

Practices	Student Role	Activities
Daily Oral or Shared Reading	Code Breaker	Teacher Read-Alouds, Reader's Theater, Choral Reading
Teacher- and Peer-Led Guided Reading (Flexible Grouping)	Text Participant	Literacy Circles, DRTA, RT
Word Study in Guided Reading Groups	Text Analyst	Word Origins, Structural Analysis, Greek and Latin Roots
Self-Selected Reading and Writing	Text User	Choice of Text, Buddy Reading, Response Journals
Comprehension Strategy Instruction	Text User	RT, RT Plus, Graphic Representations

PICTURE BOOKS AND MIDDLE SCHOOL READERS

While picture books are still most commonly enjoyed in the primary grades, good picture books can and should be enjoyed by people of all ages. In *Beyond Words: Picture Books for Older Readers and Writers,* the authors explain how they use picture books for readers of all ages to:

- Examine genres, including:
  —historical fiction
  —legends
  —folk tales
  —fantasy
  —poetry
- Introduce and complement a unit on science or history
- Study a variety of writing styles
- Teach reference and research skills to intermediate students
- Use as models in writing class, to examine the linguistic features, vocabulary, and structures of writing
  (Bishop & Hickman, 1992)

"Picture books can help eliminate the educational barriers that prevent less able students from finding appropriate texts from which to learn," explains high school teacher David Ludlam (1992). Many middle and high school students participate in parenting classes.

Middle school is not too early to promote the importance of reading to children. In Ludlam's (1992) unit on picture books, students were able to use picture books, to understand literary elements that had been beyond their grasp, develop an appreciation for the importance of early literacy experiences, and ELL students gained access to ideas they could not glean from grade level materials. Author and fifth-grade teacher Lenore Carlisle concludes: "If we recognize the picture book as a legitimate art form and as a legitimate part of literature in general, then it seems only natural that we should return to the picture book genre as a place from which we will derive reason to be delighted, to be moved, to be amazed, or to feel any of the myriad emotions evoked in us by art and literature" (Carlisle, 1992). Appendix II identifies picture books that have been used successfully with both middle and high school students.

USING ALTERNATIVE MATERIALS

Literacy is a crucial element of our cultural and social identity. Young adolescents are immersed in overlapping literacies that take many forms. Adolescent voice is integrated into these forms of literacy in ways that classroom literacy cannot or will not acknowledge. The Worthy and colleagues (1999) and Ivey and Broadus (2001) studies show that we often discount the kinds of literacy experiences that our students bring to class and denigrate the types of materials they devour outside school.

Hipple and Goza (1998) suggest broadening the middle school literacy curriculum by including audiobooks, graphic literature, and CD-ROMs.

Audiobooks have recently grown in popularity with people who spend time commuting. These books allow excellent (and popular) literature to be experienced in a very different way. Most of the texts are read by experienced actors who can create spells as they weave the tales they tell. Individuals who grew up with radio will attest to the ability of a sonorous voice to lure us into a special narrative. Indeed, Orson Welles was so adept at his reading of *War of the Worlds* in the 1930s that many Americans fled from what they thought was a real Martian invasion.

There are two ways to include audiobooks in the curriculum. One way strongly advised by Hipple and Goza (1998) is to allow students to experience the beauty and rhythm of the stories through listening and ground their discussion and enjoyment of the narratives in the auditory process. Students who struggle with text for whatever reason find this a marvelous way to hear and experience the flow of language. Small groups of students can listen and respond to parts of the story. Students may also respond in writing or graphic representations of their thoughts as they listen.

Another option would be to have students read the narrative text as they listen to the audiobook. This allows students to connect the visual and the auditory and may be useful for ELL students. Of course, students can experiment to see which approach works best for their reading or listening goals. The following is a short list of the books suggested by Hipple and Goza (1998):

- *The Barn* (Avi)
- *Beyond the Chocolate War* (Cormier)
- *Hatchet* (Paulsen)
- *The Hobbit* (Tolkien)
- *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (Taylor)
- *Silence of the Lambs* (Harris)
- *Zlata's Diary* (Filopovic)

It is important to mention that, just as with regular text, teachers should not turn this into an assessment experience. When parents and teachers read aloud to students we rarely do it because we expect a book report or an essay to result. Consider audiobooks in the same vein and just let the joy shine through.

Graphic novels and comic books are generally banned in classrooms. Most parents and teachers agree they are just not real reading. However, these types of materials combine both visual and print literacy in ways that speak to kids. Hipple and Goza (1998) maintain that all the elements of literature are found in these texts: setting, character, plot, conflict, and so forth. Surprise your students with a unit on the study of comic books as literature. It is also important to remember that these types of materials are loved and read by both high- and low-achieving readers.

CD-ROMs might be considered mega-readers. They can contain huge amounts of reference data on one disc—lexicons, encyclopedias, thesauri, atlases, and so forth. The crucial element of this technology is that kids must read and the disc can offer text at varying levels of reading achievement.

None of these items are meant to take the place of traditional print text. However, alternative materials open up more possibilities for teachers and students. Students have more options for engaging in literacy experiences and connecting their everyday worlds to what happens in the classroom.

Summary

In their synthesis of research on literacy learning, Braunger and Lewis (1997) identify core understandings about literacy development. These core understandings are connected to views of reading as a primary language process and as a tool for learning. Other sources have identified similar elements connected to the development of proficient readers and writers. Crucial components include word-level influences on comprehension (Curtis & Longo, 1999b; Pressley, 2000); motivation (Eccles & Wigfield, 1997; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000); metacognition (Flavell, 1985; Pressley, 2002); vocabulary (Pressley, 2000); and comprehension (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Pearson & Fielding, 1991; Pressley, 2000). The research trends pertinent to early adolescence indicate the importance of:

- Engagement in the reading event
- Active use of cognitive and affective processes to construct meaning
- Prior knowledge and experience
- Social interaction
- Reading and writing processes that develop simultaneously
- Literacy environments that provide rich, complex experiences to enhance reading development
- Opportunities to read extensively
- Strategic reading that develops best with authentic text and activities
- Readers and writers who have opportunities to learn a variety of strategies in a variety of ways
- Metacognitive knowledge and experience at the heart of student success

All these factors are important to consider when we are developing literacy contexts for students. However, engagement in the reading and writing process and access to interesting and relevant learning materials may be the most important areas on which to focus if students are to include the concept of reader and writer in their growing personal identities. Our classroom practice should excite adolescents' curiosity and "build on their desire to explore, strengthen their analytical and problem-solving abilities, and provide an understanding of how to make a place in the world" (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995).

Kylene Beers (1998) worked with a group of middle school students to identify why they "just said no" to reading. I was struck by the response of one student when asked to advise teachers about increasing their students' desire to read: *"Tell them to ask students what they thought. No teacher*

ever asked me what I thought. And when I start to tell them what I thought, they say, 'We all have our opinions, but what does the story tell us?' And you know what that really means? That really means what I think isn't important. But maybe it is; maybe it was important to me." This student tells us that she does not feel respected, that she does not feel competent, that she does not include literacy into what William Glasser (1990) refers to as her "quality world." In other words, reading and writing will not be an important part of her identity as an adult.

In further discussion about the students in her study, Beers (1998) indicates that students who viewed themselves as readers had similar experiences in their early years. They remembered being read to often, both at home and in school. Their homes and their schools were filled with quality literacy materials and teachers helped them develop an appreciation of the literacy experience. On the other hand those students who had limited home and early school experiences in literacy never developed what Rosenblatt (1994) calls an aesthetic stance toward literature or other reading materials.

The reader's purpose or stance defines how the text will be read and how the ideas will be derived. If, for example, a student views reading as an information-gathering event then this individual is unlikely to read for ambience, flavor, tone, and feeling. Rosenblatt (1994) distinguishes between information seekers (efferent purpose) and readers who are ready to attend to "what is being lived through the reading event" (aesthetic purpose). The students in Beers' study who were not readers had only developed an efferent stance, that is, reading was for practicing comprehension or possibly getting answers to questions that would be on a later test. They could see no pleasure or joy associated with literature or discussions of literature.

Middle school classrooms obviously have a broad range and great diversity of reading and writing behavior. However, it is possible to create more avid readers and writers in our schools than is happening now. In a five-month naturalistic study of sixth-graders, Gay Ivey (2000) identified several themes that teachers might bear in mind.

- **Middle school students don't lose interest in reading and writing.** They lose interest in the reading and writing that is typically offered at school. Now we all recognize that lots of what kids like (teen magazines, horror stories, etc.) is not high-quality literature. That does not mean we cannot start with preferences and build. The teacher in the vignette Marinating in Literature (Page 31) let student preferences and ideas lead to establishing the curriculum and the selection of materials. However, once the kids saw that Barry respected their ideas and honored their choices they were willing to read and discuss books that Barry determined would engage them in more complex thinking and better-quality writing. The idea is to get the right books connected to the students. (Appendix II contains suggested novels and picture books that appeal to middle school students.)

- **Middle school students want to share their reading and writing with peers and teachers.** There is nothing that moves kids to read like a teacher's enthusiasm for a book. One of the best ways to share and get kids hooked into reading is for teachers to read aloud to students regularly. Not only is this high on students' lists of what they like about classrooms but it broadens vocabulary, expands student knowledge of the world, provides fluency modeling, and is truly enjoyable.

  Literature circles or book clubs offer another means for sharing responses to literature. However, include expository works as well—articles

from *National Geographic, Scientific American, Nature,* and so forth. Students can discuss the ideas, examine the evidence presented, and critically evaluate the material.

- **Middle school students need real purposes for reading.** Practice is important to become a proficient reader. Strategy instruction helps increase students' ability to understand text. However, these are means to an end not ends in themselves. Kids need to read to gather data about an election issue, to find out how to make gourmet pizza, to feel the taste of slimy words on the tongue, to achieve empathy for other people. Reading and writing should help students accomplish personal and academic goals.

- **Middle school students want to succeed as readers and writers.** Some students become frustrated after years of reading failure. Even students who are "good" readers often find the demands of text beyond their abilities to handle without effective assistance. Teachers who foster optimism for achievement and improvement enable students to move ahead and to engage fully in the literacy process.

The following poem is an example of the way a student can use her growing sense of literacy to express deeply felt issues that relate to her future and the futures of her friends. This poem speaks from the heart. I am thrilled that many of our kids make our hearts sing and sob through language. How many Jessicas or Jamals or Youmes or Abduls are in our classes who speak with such authority, heart, and hope?

Land of Diminishing Dreams

The year is two thousand fifty-four,
The world is full of curses.
People walk the streets no more,
No women carry purses.

The name of the game is survival now—
Safety is far in the past
Families are huge, with tons of kids
In hopes that one will last.

Drugs are no longer looked down upon
They are a way of life.
They help us escape the wrenching stress
Of our fast world's endless strife . . .

I wake up now—it was only a dream,
But the message was terribly clear.
We'd better think hard about the future
Before our goals and our dreams disappear.

—Jessica, 16 (©Carnegie Council, 1995)

Students are rising to the challenge. They are engaging thoughtfully in challenging literacy activities and doing well on difficult standardized tests (Langer, 2001). In high-performing schools, teachers are inviting students to be members of learning communities (Langer, 2001). There is negotiation going on, choices being made, collaborative learning with teachers and students as learners together. People are being respected, cared for, and cared about. When we do what we know is good for kids, it works.

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Appendix I
Suggested Professional Books

Allen, J. (1999). *Words, words, words: Teaching vocabulary in grades 4–12.* York, ME: Stenhouse.

Based on research and practitioner experience, this book describes strategy lessons that will help students understand and use new words in reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Reading is at the center of these strategies, which include using context, building concept knowledge, analyzing word structure, and building background word knowledge.

Allen, J. (2000). *Yellow brick roads: Shared and guided paths to independent reading 4–12.* Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

This book provides research and methods for read-aloud, shared, guided, and independent reading with struggling readers. It discusses managing time and resources, using reading to support writing, assessing and evaluating, and building professional communities. Appendices include book lists, Web sites, professional resources, and graphic organizers.

Allen, J., & Gonzalez, K. (1998). *There's room for me here: Literacy workshop in the middle school.* York, ME: Stenhouse.

This book chronicles Kyle Gonzalez's first three years of teaching middle school students who struggle with literacy, with rich descriptions of her classroom experiences. Describing how she created a literacy workshop, it offers strategies and provides graphic organizers for read-alouds, and shared, guided, and independent reading and writing. Assessment and goal setting are also covered.

Benedict, S., & Carlisle, L. (Eds.). (1992). *Beyond words: Picture books for older readers and writers.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

The message from all the contributors to this celebration of the picture book is that picture books can be enjoyed by people of all ages. As librarian Carolyn Jenks writes in her chapter: "There are so many good picture books, fiction and nonfiction, that with a little imagination one can weave them into a study of nearly any subject. In fact, we need them to enrich the fabric of our findings, to add color, to provide for the reluctant reader, and to bring the group together."

Day, F.A. (1997). *Latina and Latino voices in literature for children and teenagers.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

"Come along for a passionate journey where reading is not just reading. It is also developing a relationship with the authors who wrote the books we are enjoying," invites veteran retired teacher Frances Ann Day in her guide to Latina and Latino authors. In a detailed book that provides insights into their writing styles, motivations, and points of view, Day features 38 authors, including Sandra Cisneros, Isabel Allende, and Gary Soto. The profiles include biographies, photographs, book lists, and related works.

Finn, P.J. (1999). *Literacy with an attitude: Educating working-class children in their own self-interest.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

In *Literacy With an Attitude,* Patrick Finn uses a case study of fifth-grade classrooms done by Jean Anyon to argue that two types of education have developed in the United States: empowering education that leads to powerful literacy (education of the upper classes), and domesticating education that leads to functional literacy (education of the working classes and, increasingly, the middle classes). He argues that this system has become the status quo and suggests methods taken from the work of Paulo Freire to help the recipients of domesticating education advocate for access to powerful literacy.

Flippo, R.F. (Ed.). (2001). *Reading researchers in search of common ground.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

More than a decade ago, Rona F. Flippo, professor of education at Fitchburg State College, Fitchburg, Mass, set out to conduct an "expert study" to determine what common ground is shared by reading experts, despite differences in philosophies and experiences. She concluded: "The real common ground includes the common understanding that reading is not simple, and there are no simple answers or solutions that can be applied to all children and situations. Instead of simplistic answers, solutions, and one-way-only approaches, the common wisdom of the field points to the need to allow teachers the flexibility to select the methods, approaches, and materials to fit the particular child and situation. Reading development and instruction is far too complex and involves far too many variables to try to simplify and prescribe it for all children in all situations" (p. 178).

Harvey, S. (1998). *Nonfiction matters: Reading, writing, and research in grades 3–8.* York, ME: Stenhouse.

In this highly practical and readable book, Stephanie Harvey, one of the authors of *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension To Enhance Understanding,* once again shares her passion about reading, writing, and inquiry. Why is nonfiction so compelling for students? Harvey explains: "Learners are naturally curious. Teachers who invite kids to identify an interest and ask questions about it are rewarded with classrooms filled with excitement, enthusiasm, and wonder .... Teachers and schools that celebrate curiosity and value wonder provide the foundation needed for lasting learning to take place. Live the questions. Value the questions. They are the doors to understanding."

Moore, D.W., Alvermann, D.E., & Hinchman, K.A. (Eds.). (2000). *Struggling adolescent readers: A collection of reading strategies.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

This book is based on 40 articles that appeared in the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy.* The six sections include Working with Struggling Readers, Acknowledging Cultural Ties, Supporting Classroom Reading, Supporting Classroom Writing and Inquiry, Varying Texts to Meet Students' Needs and Interests, and Connecting In-School and Out-of-School Reading. This is an excellent resource for teachers seeking ways to maximize engagement and to optimize learning in the literacy classroom.

Smith, M.W., & Wilhelm, J.D. (2002). *"Reading don't fix no Chevys": Literacy in the lives of young men.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Moving beyond gender stereotypes, this book asks: How can we better understand literacy among adolescent boys so we can teach them better? The authors first explore the social construction of gender and ground their discussion in critical theory. They are then able to learn why gender is a significant variable for teachers to consider, and how social factors influence boys' developing reading skills. The authors consider past school experiences, class, and ethnicity, looking at boys in an urban, largely African American and Puerto Rican school; a regional suburban high school; a rural middle and high school; and a private middle and high school. From the voices of boys, we learn that they favor challenging activities that offer enjoyment, social interaction, and clear goals. They also like to read for a purpose. The authors ask teachers how they can incorporate this understanding into a curriculum that caters to boys' interests while also developing skills and a passion for a wider range of literature.

Tovani, C. (2000). *I read it, but I don't get it: Comprehension strategies for adolescent readers.* Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

In her book that offers practical, theory-based advice from the real world of classrooms, accomplished teacher, staff developer, and author Cris Tovani confesses: "I didn't really learn how to read until I was in my thirties." What turned Tovani into an avid reader was joining a book club where readers shared ideas, questions, and inferences. "Watching expert readers taught me how important my own reading is. If I am going to help students become better readers, it is crucial that I read myself. The strategies I use to make sense of the text are the very strategies I need to teach to not only struggling readers but also college-bound students as well," she writes. She brings these strategies to life in her descriptions of her reading workshop for adolescent readers.

Wilhelm, J.D., Baker, T.N., & Dube, J. (2001). *Strategic reading: Guiding students to lifelong literacy, 6–12.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton-Cook.

Strategic Reading begins by asking teachers to understand and articulate the theories on which their practices are based, to better develop classroom strategies that benefit students. Informed by Vygotsky and Hillocks and the notion that what is learned must be actively taught, the authors present a model of learning-centered instructional practice. Guided by a transactional theory of literature, the authors discuss the various ways readers bring meanings and strategies to a text in order to understand it. *Strategic Reading* provides resources that can help students understand form and substance, content and processed learning. *Strategic Reading* does offer many resources

and tools to help teachers guide adolescent readers to engagement, competence, and independence, but its focus is less on strategies than on the argument that "reading and writing should create new meaning, connections, and relationships. Reading and writing, like all effective learning is dialectical and social, and makes use of past and present materials to reach into the future" (p. 52).

Wilhelm, J.D. (2001). *Improving comprehension with think-aloud strategies: Modeling what good readers do.* New York, NY: Scholastic Professional Books.

Promoting action strategies for readers, the author finds that middle school and intermediate readers often struggle with literary challenges and new conventions in their texts. He presents teachers with the think-aloud technique to allow readers to document their thoughts, feelings, actions, and perceptions as they read. Practicing the strategies of experienced readers allows struggling readers to strengthen their literacy skills. The book is filled with tools and ideas for deepening student comprehension and engagement.

Appendix II
Suggested Authors and Their Works

BOOKS BY AUTHOR

Avi

www.avi-writer.com/

Interview from author's Web page:

When were you born? 1937, in the city of New York. I was raised in Brooklyn.

Where did you get that name? My twin sister gave it to me when we were both about a year old. And it stuck.

Why don't you tell your real name? The fact is, Avi is the only name I use.

When did you become a writer? I think you become a writer when you stop writing for yourself or your teachers and start thinking about readers. I made up my mind to do that when I was a high school senior.

Do you have any advice for people who want to write? I believe reading is the key to writing. The more you read, the better your writing can be.

The Barn, *Grades 4–8*

Ben's father is dying and he and his siblings build a barn for him. Their hope is that their father will recover from a stroke, which has incapacitated him. The day after the barn is finished they discover that their father died during the night.

The Fighting Ground, *Grades 4–8*

On April 3, 1778, America is deeply involved in a revolution. A 13-year-old boy who helps his father plant crops wants to join in the action. He is ready, willing and, since he can shoot, considers himself able to fight. There is just one problem: his father won't let him go.

A Place Called Ugly, *Young Adult*

The town wants to raze the house where 14-year-old Owen has spent most of his summers. In its place will be a modern hotel. Despite the fact that very few people including his own family agree with him, Owen sets about trying to save his summer home.

Poppy, *Grades 4–8, illustrated by Brian Floca*

Poppy and her family of tiny deer mice live under the protection and tyranny of Mr. Ocax, a great horned owl. Leaving Mr. Ocax's territory without permission can result in death. While this is a hardship and leads to great fear, Mr. Ocax does keep the porcupines at bay.

Joseph Bruchac

Joseph Bruchac is a poet, storyteller, and publisher who has received many literary honors, including the American Book Award and the PEN Syn-

dicated Fiction Award. Bruchac was raised by Abenaki Indian and Slovak grandparents in the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains in upstate New York. His reverence for Native American stories, legends, and songs was sparked by the stories of his Abenaki grandfather and his old friends.

The Girl Who Married the Moon: Tales From Native North America, *Grades 6–8, coauthored by Gayle Ross*
In this sequel to *Flying With the Eagle, Racing the Great Bear,* Joseph Bruchac and Gayle Ross bring to life 16 stories that celebrate the passage from girlhood to womanhood.

The Heart of a Chief, *Grades 5–8*
Chris Pecola, an 11-year-old Penacook Indian, wrestles with cultural conflict, his father's alcoholism, and the opening of a gambling casino on tribal grounds. Chris battles at school as he leads a project to eliminate the racist names of sports teams and deals with negative feelings from mocking sports fans at a game. The message Chris communicates is respect, dignity, and honesty. This is the story of a young man forming an identity out of the struggle to reconcile his culture with modern American society.

The Journal of Jesse Smoke: A Cherokee Boy, Trail of Tears, 1838 *[My Name Is America series], Grades 5–8*
The events leading up to the Trail of Tears as well as the terrible trials of this march are depicted in this story written in diary format. The Cherokee call this Nunda utsun yi-, The Place Where the People Cried. The Smoke family abandons all their possessions and their land and makes the long forced march with thousands of their tribesmen.

Skeleton Man, *Grades 5–9*
"His fingers spread out so wide that they look like the talons of a giant bird .... His eyes are twin blue flames burning from within his skull." This is the description of the guardian Molly sees in her dreams. He claims to be a great uncle come to care for Molly after her parents disappear. Molly does not buy into this idea. It takes believing in her dreams and careful sleuthing for Molly to find her way out of her predicament.

Dia Calhoun

www.winslowpress.com/diacalhoun/author.cfm
Dia Calhoun lives on Puget Sound in Washington State. Before moving into writing young adult literature, she was a lettering and logo artist. She worked on book jackets and other projects but her most visible work is the Alaska Airlines logo. Her book *Firegold* hinges on the memory of her husband's family orchard with a river roaring far off. Calhoun is drawn to fantasy writing because it challenges her imagination and draws readers into ideas and issues closely but in a different setting.

Aria of the Sea, *Grades 4–8*
Cerinthe is a 13-year-old living on the island of Normost in the kingdom of Windward. She is a folk healer but really wants to become a dancer. When Cerinthe is unable to save her mother's life she travels across Windward to audition at the School of the Royal Dancers.

Firegold, *Young Adult, illustrated by Herve Blondon*
Jonathan is the only person in the valley who does not have brown eyes. Valley folk are whispering about his red-haired mother. Is Jonathan one of the "loony-blues," or one of the Dalriada—feared mountain people with fabulous horses, mystical powers, and horns growing out of their heads?

Gary Paulsen

www.randomhouse.com/features/garypaulsen/

Born May 17, 1939, Gary Paulsen is one of America's most popular writers for young people. Although he was never a dedicated student, Paulsen developed a passion for reading at an early age. It is Paulsen's overwhelming belief in young people that drives him to write. His intense desire to tap deeply into the human spirit and to encourage readers to observe and care about the world around them has brought him both enormous popularity with young people and critical acclaim from the children's book community.

Brian's Winter, *Young Adult*

In his earlier book, *Hatchet,* 13-year-old Brian Robeson learned to survive alone in the Canadian wilderness, armed only with his hatchet. Finally, as millions of readers know, he was rescued at the end of the summer. But what if Brian *hadn't* been rescued? What if he had been left to face his deadliest enemy—winter?

The Car, *Young Adult*

Fourteen-year-old Terry Anders has been abandoned by his parents. He has no choice but to go on, and he begins by assembling pieces of a car kit from his father's garage. When he finishes the car known as "the Cat," Terry sets out from Cleveland to Portland to search for an uncle he hardly knows. Along the way Terry picks up a wandering Vietnam vet who ultimately guides him on a journey of discovery and survival.

Guts, *Young Adult*

Gary Paulsen has had real-life adventures that inspired him to write about Brian, introduced in *Hatchet.* He describes how he made his own bows and arrows, and takes readers on his first hunting trips; shares special memories, such as the night he attracted every mosquito in the county, or how he met the moose with a sense of humor.

Hermanas/Sisters, *Grades 8–10*

Paulsen tells the stories of two 14-year-old girls in a Texas town: Rosa, an illiterate, illegal immigrant from Mexico who earns money by selling herself on the streets, and bleached white-blonde Traci, taught from toddlerhood that "appearance was everything," and whose entire life at the moment hinges on getting on the cheerleading squad. The book is short and bilingual—the English version begins from one side, a fluid Spanish translation from the other.

Soldier's Heart: Being the Story of the Enlistment and Due Service of the Boy Charley Goddard in the First Minnesota Volunteers, *Grades 6–10*

Based on the life of a real boy, it tells the story of Charley Goddard, who lies his way into the Union Army at the age of 15. Charley has never been anyplace beyond Winona, Minnesota, and thinks war would be a great adventure. And it is—at first—but then comes the battle. Charley screams, "Make it stop now!" disbelieving that anything so horrible could be real.

Chris Van Allsburg

www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/authors/vanallsburg/

Chris Van Allsburg began his artistic life as a sculptor, but even his early pieces show his emergence as a storyteller. While he was still at Rhode Island School of Design, author and artist David Macaulay looked at Van Allsburg's drawings and encouraged him to send them to editors. As a result he developed a relationship with David Macaulay's editor, Walter Lorraine, at Houghton Mifflin Company. They met and discussed a book Van Allsburg wanted to do about topiary gardens. The idea evolved into *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi,* his first picture book, which was chosen as a Caldecott Honor Book.

Ben's Dream, *Grades K–6*
On a terrifically rainy day, Ben has a dream in which he and his house float by the monuments of the world, half submerged in floodwater. "The story idea, so economically carried out in the text, is illustrated in the artist's meticulous drawings, marvels of symbolism, reality, imagination, and perspective."

The Mysteries of Harris Burdick, *Grades 4–8*
Fourteen black-and-white drawings, each accompanied by a title and a caption, entice readers to make up their own stories.

The Wreck of the Zephyr, *Grades K–6*
Amazon.com reader review: "The art work alone is worth the price of admission. If you know of a child or adult who loves to sail, and feels free on the water, this is the book to get. Many times we have a tendency to go too far. The author shows us how seductive it is to test our limits in spite of our knowledge of the risks. But, this book is about dreams and possibilities more than anything else."

Yin

Born and raised in Manhattan, Yin learned about her heritage through kung fu classes and Sunday family gatherings. She graduated from Baruch College. Besides writing and acting as an interpreter for Chinese families, Yin has been a Wall Street analyst. *Coolies* is her first picture book.

Coolies, *Grades K–6, illustrated by Chris Soentpiet*
Coolies is a fictionalized account of two brothers who left famine and war behind in China to seek their fortunes as railroad builders in the United States. In the 1850s thousands of Chinese immigrants suffered terrible weather, intense physical labor, and blatant prejudice as they worked to build the transcontinental railroad across the United States. The beautiful illustrations convey the enormity of the railroad project and the personal and physical challenges the Chinese overcame to maintain their lives and their dignity.

BOOKS BY THEME

Historical Fiction

KAREN CUSHMAN
www.eduplace.com/rdg/author/cushman/
Karen Cushman had no trouble coming up with ideas for books, and no trouble sharing them with her husband. But one day, as she started to tell him about a new idea she had, he handed her paper and pencil and told her this time he wanted her to write it down. What she wrote was the outline for her first book *Catherine, Called Birdy* (Clarion, 1994), a Newbery Honor Award-winner. Cushman calls herself a "late bloomer." Her books address many of the issues a young person is interested in—issues of identity, responsibility, limitation, and what it means to be human in this world.

The Ballad of Lucy Whipple, *Grades 5–9*
California Morning does not want to leave her Massachusetts home for the mining camps of California. Seeking a way to control some part of her life, she decides to change her name to Lucy. Karen Cushman brings the American Gold Rush to life with all its color and challenge.

Catherine, Called Birdy, *Young Adult*
"Corpus Bones! I utterly loathe my life." Catherine is determined that her father will not marry her off to a rich old man. Through wit and wiles she eliminates several prospective suitors. However, one suitor is adamant. Will a clever, spunky young girl outsmart him?

Matilda Bone, *Young Adult*
"To Blood and Bone Alley, home of leech, barber-surgeon, and apothecary, comes Matilda." Horrified by her new surroundings, Matilda harks back

to the days when all she did was study and pray for advice. Matilda Bone is a witty novel about a young girl who is able to turn herself and her world around.

The Midwife's Apprentice, *Grades 6–12*
Amazon.com reader review: "Unlike *Birdy,* this book is not written in diary form or even the first person, but it is just as delightful, presenting us with a gutsy young girl in the harsh Middle Ages. Although she's a social outcast, homeless, nameless Beetle makes her personal pilgrimage to a useful occupation and the discovery of her self-worth. This unlikely heroine from the muck of society acquires skills to survive, chooses a new name, and discovers her own personal value as she struggles against the callous villagers and a real midwife whose tongue is as sharp as her name. Despite her employer's brutal treatment, Alyce acquires the civilizing touch of humanity, as she is gradually accepted into the life of her new village. She shows compassion toward animals, helps a stray waif of a boy, and ingeniously bests 'the devil' himself when he causes an uproar in the village."

African American Experience

Sugar in the Raw: Voices of Young Black Girls in America, *Grade 6–Adult, by Rebecca Carroll*
This is a work of biographical research that chronicles the stories of 15 African American young women. Carroll crossed the nation interviewing African American girls between the ages of 11 and 20 to hear their stories and to share their perspectives. More than 50 young women were interviewed from a cross section of U.S. society. These are interesting profiles that show various ways in which these girls deal with their lives. Nicole is biracial (white and black) but "I don't consider myself biracial, black, or white. I consider myself, Nicole ...." Jaminica, a 14-year-old, says "You can't escape racism. It's everywhere ...." This is a powerful book for discussion in middle and high school classrooms.

The Great Migration: An American Story, *Grades 5–12, by Walter Dean Myers, illustrated by Jacob Lawrence*
This chronicle of the migration of African Americans from the southern agricultural areas to northern industrial cities is told through marvelous paintings. Lawrence painted the Migration of the Negro series between 1940 and 1941. His paintings were exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. Myers is a poet and highly acclaimed author of children's books.

From Slave Ship to Freedom Road, *Grades 6–12, by Julius Lester, illustrated by Rod Brown*
At first glance this looks like a picture book for children, but the topic and story are more demanding. The paintings evoke strong emotions. On Page 19 there is a painting of an elderly man that is exquisite. The facing page tells us that this is Big Tibby whose son, Little Tibby, had been sold away from him 50 years before. The look on his face shows how he still yearns for his little boy. This is a book that needs exploration and discussion as students try to understand the journey of African Americans from slave ships to freedom.

Richard Wright and the Library Card, *Grades 4–8, by William Miller, illustrated by Gregory Christie*
This is a fictionalized account of an episode from Richard Wright's autobiography, *Black Boy,* written in 1945. Wright is a boy hungry for knowledge with a need to read and learn. At 17 he gets a job in Memphis but is unable to get a library card. He finally approaches a man called Jim Falk and shares his desire. Falk lends Wright his card and the door to books is opened. Wright brings home Dickens, Tolstoy, and Crane. Eventually he earns enough to get to Chicago and more opportunities, not only to read but to write. Wright publishes

his first book, *Native Son,* in 1940. This is an excellent introduction to biography for students 4–12.

Malcolm X: By any Means Necessary, *Grades 6–12, by Walter Dean Myers*
Born Malcolm Little, this African American boy witnessed the degradation that prejudice and racism create in human beings. In prison, serving time for burglary, a sea change occurred and Little became Malcolm X, leader of the Black Muslims, a group of African American men determined to win justice and liberty for their people by whatever means required. They were strong and unafraid and their stance shocked and frightened many white and black Americans in the civil rights battle raging in 1960s America.

If I Only Had a Horn: Young Louis Armstrong, *picture book that works well to introduce biography to students in grades 4–12, by Roxane Orgill, illustrated by Leonard Jenkins*
This is a great story about a man and his music. The information comes from two autobiographies written by Lois Armstrong *(Satchmo* and *Swing That Music).* Jenkins' paintings are powerful, although a bit dark in tone.

Nightjohn, *Young Adult, by Gary Paulsen*
Imagine being beaten for learning to read, shackled and whipped for learning a few letters of the alphabet. Now, imagine a man brave enough to risk torture in order to teach others how to read. His name is Nightjohn, and he sneaks into the slave camps at night to teach other slaves how to read and write.

Sarny: A Life Remembered, *Young Adult, by Gary Paulsen*
Sarny was introduced in Paulsen's story, *Nightjohn.* It was from Nightjohn that Sarny learned to read. The story chronicles Sarny's quest for her sold children and her mission to pass the gift of literacy on to a new generation of her people.

Words With Wings: A Treasury of African American Poetry and Art, *Grades 4–Adult, edited by Belinda Rochelle*
"Each poem and work of art was selected because it inspires our own creative energy." Rochelle has included works by Alice Walker, Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes, Jacob Lawrence, Lev T. Mills, Charles Dawson, Henry Ossawa Tanner, and many other great African American poets and artists. The book also has short biographies of each of the artists and poets. This is a wonderful and important book to have in any classroom.

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, *Young Adult, by Mildred Taylor*
This winner of the 1977 Newbery Medal tells the story of Cassie and her family in a year of turbulence. The family has been burned out and Cassie has been humiliated by a white girl for no other reason than that Cassie is black. The Logan family determines to own a piece of land on which they can plant roots and it is this quest that fosters courage and pride in the face of great challenges.

Let the Circle Be Unbroken, *Young Adult, by Mildred Taylor*
Winner of the Coretta Scott King Award, this story again shares the trials and joys of the Logan family. Family members and friends face unjust arrests, destruction of property, and denial of their right to vote. However, standing together with courage, love, and understanding they fight the greatest prejudice.

Native American Stories

Clans of Many Nations, *Grades 7–12, by Peter Blue Cloud/Aroniawenrate (Mohawk)*
These poems, spanning 25 years in the life of one of the major literary voices of Native people, speak of New York City's high steel construction and quiet mountains, of Alcatraz Island and "this bit of Mohawk territory encircled by cities, towns,

freeway and seaway" that "cannot be what my ancestors dreamed." His writing is beautiful.

Mountain Windsong: A Novel of the Trail of Tears, *Grades 7–12, by Robert J. Conley (Cherokee)*
In weaving together song, legend, and historical documents, Conley tells the love story of two ordinary people caught up in the removal from their traditional lands and brings to life the suffering and endurance of the Cherokee people.

Waterlily, *Grades 7–12, by Ella Cara Deloria (Yankton)*
Waterlily, finished in 1947 and not published during Deloria's lifetime, is a novel, a life story of the Dakota people, as their lives were beginning to be disrupted by the Wasichu. Told from a woman's viewpoint, it emphasizes the traditional network of obligations and relationships that formed cultural unity. "Teton children loved to give. As far back as they could remember they had been made to give or their elders gave in their name, honoring them, until they learned to feel a responsibility to do so. Furthermore, they found it pleasant to be thanked graciously and have their ceremonial names spoken aloud. For giving was basic to Dakota life. The idea behind it was this: if everyone gives, then everyone gets; it is inevitable. And so old men and women preached continuously: Be hospitable. Be generous. Nothing is too good for giving away. The children grew up hearing that, until it was a fixed notion."

Red Clay: Poems and Stories, *Grades 7–12, by Linda Hogan (Chicasaw)*
"These poems," Hogan says, "grew out of the Oklahoma terrain resonant with the calls of frogs, my grandfather's horse and wagon, my grandmother's uncut braids wrapped about her head in the traditional Chickasaw manner, the firefly-lit nights we sat outside and heard stories, including the one of the gun stocks made from our stolen black walnut trees. In these poems live red land and light."

Solar Storms, *Grades 7–12, by Linda Hogan (Chickasaw)*
A hurt and rebellious teenager, scarred in face and spirit, sets out to search for her birth family, her mother, and herself. Reunited with her great-grandmother, great-great-grandmother, and the woman who adopted her mother, this family of women sets off by canoe on a journey to their ancestral homeland in the far North, where a hydroelectric dam project threatens the existence of two indigenous nations.

Men on the Moon: Collected Short Stories, *Grades 7–12, by Simon Ortiz (Acoma)*
Ortiz is a very accomplished storyteller. "For me," he says, "there has never been a conscious moment without story." Here are stories of migrants working potato fields in Idaho and longing for home, a grandfather trying to understand why men go to the moon to bring back rocks, three women in a laundromat silently giving each other courage, a daring escape from boarding school, a father teaching his son to fly a kite, and white people who want to become Indians.

The Bird Who Cleans the World and Other Mayan Fables, *Grades 5–8, by Victor Montejo (Maya), color illustrations*
These Jakaltek Mayan folktales were first told to the author by his mother and the elders of his Guatemalan village. Rooted in nature, they demonstrate the values of honesty, understanding, and respect, and the Mayan way of life and learning.

The Trickster and the Troll , *Grades 7–12, by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve (Lakota)*
Virginia's husband is Norwegian, and their children call themselves "Sioux-wegian." It is for her grandchildren that she wrote this tale of the friendship between Iktomi and the Troll, who, with their respective humans, suffer great loss in a hostile, changing environment.

When Thunders Spoke, *Grades 7–12, by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve (Lakota), b/w illustrations*
Norman Two Bull is a 15-year-old impatient with the old ways. One day Norman finds an ancient relic that has power to make things happen. With his grandfather's encouragement, Norman learns that things are not always what they seem, and that the supernatural is to be respected.

Sexual Identity

Am I Blue: Coming Out From the Silence, *Young Adult, edited by Marion Dane Bauer*
This is a collection of 15 stories that explore gay and lesbian issues. Some of the authors are part of the gay and lesbian community and others are outside that culture. All write about issues and concerns facing young adults whether they be gay and lesbian or others who want to understand and support young people in their search for personal identity.

Equinox, *Young Adult, by Monte Killingsworth*
Autumn is a 14-year-old girl living on a small island off the coast of Seattle. Her parents decide they should move to the mainland for a variety of reasons. Autumn is devastated and sets out to convince her parents that leaving the island would be a big mistake for everyone, but especially herself. She creates a wonderful, illustrated journal of people, flora, and fauna of the island. In the process she learns a secret about her mother and a young woman her mother has "befriended." Autumn is forced to view love in a broader manner and come to terms with what this new knowledge will mean for her and her family.

Empress of the World, *Young Adult, by Sara Ryan*
The Siegel Institute Summer Program for Gifted Youth draws bright, articulate teenagers who live like college students for eight weeks. On the first day, Nic meets Katrina, the computer girl, Isaac, the West coast nice-guy-despite-himself, Kevin, the inarticulate composer ... and Battle. Battle Hall Davies is a beautiful blonde dancer from North Carolina. She's everything Nic isn't. Soon the two are friends—and then, startlingly, more than friends. "What do you do when you think you're attracted to guys, and then you meet a girl who steals your heart?"

PICTURE BOOKS FOR OLDER READERS

Reading aloud and discussing stories are some of the best ways for young people to build vocabulary and conceptual knowledge, enhance memory, imagination, attention span, listening, and comprehension skills. In addition, these activities can become a time of reflection, sharing, and empathy. Listed below are some of the many picture books that can spur rich conversations about such themes as intergenerational relationships, courage, friendship, overcoming adversity, prejudice, grief, rejection, and loneliness.

Istvan Banyai

Hungarian born, Banyai has developed a following in the United States with his many creative illustrations and animations. His work can be seen in such magazines as *Atlantic Monthly, Time, The New Yorker,* and *Rolling Stone.* Banyai has also created music covers for Sony and Capital Records. Istvan Banyai lives in New York with his wife and son.

Zoom, *Grades 5–8*
This wordless book mimics a camera as it zooms out from page to page. Each page reveals a small part of a larger picture that gradually develops through the book. Stark, glossy black pages face the illustrations of each piece of the developing picture. A terrific book that stimulates questions that lead to hypotheses about what the viewer is actually seeing. It works well with a variety of ages.

Re-Zoom, *Grades 5–8*
This is the second of Banyai's wordless books that start with scattered images and the zoom out to broaden the scenes on each page. The glossy black facing pages highlight the illustrations. Banyai has included a caricature of Alfred Hitchcock in several scenes that zoom out from what appears to be a movie soundstage. The reader eventually realizes that the scenes are from a book being read by a young man on a subway. The illustrator continues to zoom out until only the red light of the subway is noticeable. *Re-Zoom,* like its predecessor, is stimulating for all levels of students.

Eve Bunting

http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/bunting.htm
Born in Northern Ireland in 1928, Eve Bunting immigrated to the United States in 1959. Her first inspiration was her father, who read a variety of books to her every day, especially poetry. She started writing her own stories as a child and read and discussed them with her father. She has published more than 130 children's books, some under the names of Evelyn Bolton or A.E. Bunting. Her picture books offer children's views of real-world issues and the complex feelings they and their families face.

Moonstick: The Seasons of the Sioux, *Grades 4–6, illustrated by John Sandford*
This beautifully illustrated book tells the story of the 13 moons of the Sioux year. When winter ends a Lakota boy works with his father to make a moon counting stick. On the advent of each new moon a notch is cut into the stick. Along with each new moon come changes in climate, vegetation, animals, and tribal activities. The boy learns that changes are part of the life cycle but the cycle is constant.

Smoky Night, *Grades 3–5, illustrated by David Diaz*
Riots in the neighborhood cause a boy and his mother to evacuate their burning apartment building. Amid the feelings of fear and loss, the family begins to form a friendship with a woman different from them, who they had stayed away from before. A Caldecott winner, the reading level is primary but the story will captivate upper elementary/middle level students also. A stimulating book, both in story and illustrations, it provokes a discussion of feelings common to all human beings.

Your Move, *Grades 3–4, illustrated by James Ransome*
James takes care of his brother Isaac while their mom works as a night waitress. James has been invited to join a "club" but first he must spray paint a road sign to obliterate the name of another neighborhood club—the Snakes. When the Snakes show up unexpectedly, boys scatter, shots are fired, and Isaac is on the ground with blood under him. James is scared that six-year-old Isaac has been shot. James and Isaac learn lessons about the consequences of decisions they make and what they might have to do to be members of the "club." The reading level of the text is third to fourth grade but the content is appropriate for middle level students.

Joseph Bruchac

A Boy Called Slow: The True Story of Sitting Bull, *Grades 4–5, illustrated by Rocco Baviera*
A coming-of-age story about a boy who lived in the shadow of a great warrior and was named Slow as a child. Despite early difficulties this boy grew into the great chief we know as Sitting Bull. Struggling as a child to be the best rider, hunter, and wrestler, Slow at 14 leads a war party and sends the enemy Crows running. With great pride Slow's father renames him Sitting Bull. The reading level is about fourth grade but the story and illustrations are appealing to students in middle level classes.

Crazy Horse's Vision, *Grades 3–4, illustrated by S.D. Nelson*
Curly is a brave and thoughtful young man who is deeply affected by an attack on his village by white soldiers. Not knowing what to do or how to defend his people, he rides out onto the plains on a vision quest. Years later, Curly has grown to be a generous, serious man. When the meaning of his vision is finally revealed to him by his father, his father bestows his own name on him, Tashunka Witco–Crazy Horse. The illustrator is a Lakota and uses the colors and styles of the Lakota to show the connection between the spirit world and the world of the Plains Indian. The reading level is upper elementary.

Navajo Long Walk: The Tragic Story of a Proud People's Forced March From Their Homeland, *Grades 4–8, illustrated by Shanto Begay*
This is a picture book for older readers that tells the story of the forced removal of the Navajo from their homeland in the 1860s. The Navajo were force-marched more than 400 miles to a desolate reservation. Bruchac tells the story from the Navajo viewpoint and deals with white racism behind this event. A federal commission appointed by President Andrew Johnson investigated the Navajo displacement and eventually the tribe was allowed to return to the Navajo homeland.

Lynne Cherry

Cherry's most popular books are about environmental issues. Her particular interest in the Nashua River was the people's belief in the importance of cleaning up the river and their willingness to see the project through to success.

A River Ran Wild: An Environmental History, *Grades 3–5*
In this beautiful story the author/illustrator chronicles the changes in a river through six centuries. The Nashua people named the river and over the centuries it moves from a source of life for the Nashua to a severely polluted, ecologically damaged body of water. The people of Nashua, New Hampshire, finally fight to restore the river to its original beauty. The readability of the text is fourth grade but the topic of water pollution can be introduced to middle and high school students through this book.

Mendel Grossman (Photographer) and Frank Dabba Smith (Author)

Mendel Grossman was born in Poland in 1913 and was confined to the Lodz Ghetto in the early days of World War II. From 1940 to 1945, he photographed life in the ghetto and hid the best of his negatives in the walls of his apartment. The photos in this book are from that collection. He died in 1945 just before the Germans surrendered. Frank Dabba Smith is a rabbi and photographer who did his rabbinical dissertation on the impact of photographs as propaganda and communication prior to and during the Holocaust.

My Secret Camera: Life in the Lodz Ghetto, *Grades 4–6*
This book is the legacy of a Jewish man living under Nazi occupation in Poland. Grossman wanted to show the world the fear, challenges to survival, and the suffering of the people who were his neighbors in the ghetto. The reading level of this text is upper elementary but the pictures are for older students. There are photos of children used to pulling carts like beasts of burden, men standing in breadlines, people packed and ready to make a train trip from which they will never return, and Nazi soldiers marching down the streets of Lodz.

Ken Mochizuki (Author) and Dom Lee (Illustrator)

Ken Mochizuki lived with his parents in Minidka Internment Camp in Idaho during World War II.

Dom Lee is from Seoul, South Korea, and has a master's degree in visual arts.

Baseball Saved Us, *Grades 3–5*
This book won the Parents' Choice Award in 1993. It tells the story of Japanese-Americans interned during World War II. It describes the hot dusty summer days and cold frozen nights, endless lines for food or the bathroom, poorly made barracks, and most of all, boredom. Families were on edge and tempers flared. One of the men decided to construct a baseball diamond and set up baseball teams. Ken became adept at the game and found the skill one way to reintegrate himself when the family was sent home after the war.

Patricia Polacco

www.patriciapolacco.com/
... "when you write, keep the stories small and close to your heart. When you get too far away from your heart, you can't find your way back" .... This is Patricia Polacco's advice to young writers and this idea of writing from the heart is apparent in all of her stories and illustrations.

The Butterfly, *Grades 4–6*
Prolific author/illustrator Patricia Polacco once again draws on her family history, this time to tell a story of resistance and friendship in Nazi-occupied France. Monique wakens to find a little ghost sitting on the foot of her bed but when she speaks, the ghost runs away. Eventually Monique discovers that the little ghost is Sevrine, the daughter of a Jewish family her mother has been sheltering in their basement. When the security of the family is in peril, they flee to a new refuge, leaving Monique fearful for their safety. Later as Monique and her mother work in their garden, one butterfly arrives and then many, and Monique is convinced that butterflies are a sign that Sevrine and her family are safe and well.

Pink and Say, *Grades 4–6, available in Spanish*
This is the story of two teens who become friends during the American Civil War. Pink is the son of slaves who rescues Say, the son of poor whites. Pink's mother and family nurse Say back to health. Later, Pink's mother and brothers are murdered in a raid and Pink and Say are taken to Andersonville prison. Pink is hanged in prison but Say survives to pass down the story to his children and grandchildren. A beautiful illustration shows Pink and Say's hands clutched together as Pink is taken by the guards. Later in life Say shakes hands with Abraham Lincoln and sees a physical connection from Lincoln to Say to Pink. While reviews indicate this story is for K–5, the content and concepts involved are really more appropriate for upper elementary/middle school. The book is also a great introduction to the Civil War for middle and high school students.

Thank You, Mr. Falker, *Grades 3–6*
Trisha looked forward to first grade when she would learn to read the books that her family had read to her throughout her childhood. But reading becomes a struggle. Confused and embarrassed, Trisha is mocked by her classmates. When her family moves to California, Trisha hopes that finally she will learn to read but she is no more successful in her new school ... until a new teacher, Mr. Falker, comes to teach. He discovers Trisha's secret and works with her until the letters begin to take shape. Years later Patricia Polacco, the author, meets Mr. Falker again, and when he asks what she does for a living, she explains that she writes books for children.

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Author(s): Maureen Carr

Corporate Source (if appropriate): Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

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